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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 347. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 24TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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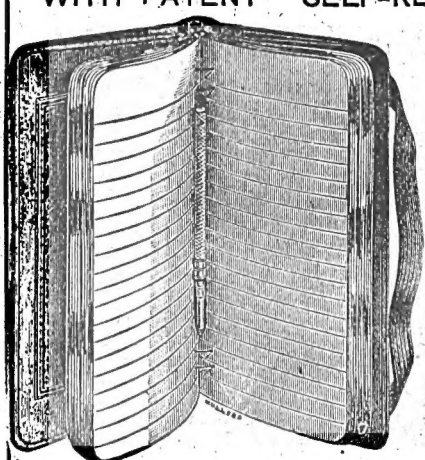

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SHORT STORIES

No. 347.] [ONE PENNY.

EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

For the Week ending August 24th, 1895.

Reforming a Lover.

MARGARET BARTRAM was trying hard to understand her own heart, and was talking freely to Kilby Brooke. They had drawn their chairs close to the open fire, turning their backs on the snowy streets which the parted damask curtains showed under a cold afternoon's sun.

"You see, Kilby, I am loved to quite an extravagant degree. It is pleasant to be loved. I have always felt in harmony with St. Augustine since I came across his confession that he was in love with being loved. To be no less frank, so am I. It may be that that was before he became a saint," she added, reflectively, "but no matter. Now, I want to choose the best love that I can get—something that will satisfy me all my life long. What do you think of Lucien Hargreve, to begin with? He is a bric-a-bracky sort of man, you know; ornamental, always going in for the unique and the beautiful. He works hard for me, Kilby, he really does. And there is no end to his versatility. Now it is a book, or a box of flowers, or some happy suggestion for an afternoon or evening—or it may be an exquisite letter marked "special," to tell me that he loves me. It must cost him a pretty sum just for messengers."

Margaret laughed. Kilby looked as if he was thinking hard, his brow fixed in a reflective frown.

"But, Kilby, I love to be sought after and waited upon—my passing words treated as things of importance—and I don't want it to be a matter of six months or a year, but for my lifetime. Now, if I should marry Lucien, there would be a stop to the messengers and things. He would naturally come to the end of his resources in the course of time, and as his surprises are his chief charm, there would be nothing left."

Kilby looked relieved, and unbent his brow a little. Margaret went on discursively from one admirer to another, striking off their characteristics with a careless but unerring touch, laughing at them all, her mind showing the variability of the magnetic needle before it has found its true direction. Kilby sat quite silent, his face showing that he was intently considering the eligibility of the different aspirants to Margaret's affections as they were separately brought before him. He seemed to relax, mind and body, when Margaret said, with a glance at the clock: "But it is time for me to dress. Thank you so much for helping me to think. Somehow you always make things plain to me. If you care to wait, you may see my new gown."

"I will wait," Kilby said, and reseated himself as Margaret left the room. It was a matter of vital importance to him what Margaret should wear. He smoothed his glossy dark hair, parted evenly down the middle, away from his serene white forehead, flicked off a speck of dust from his trousers, and took out a cigar. For an hour he sat before the fire, smoking thoughtfully.

When Margaret returned, her exquisite neck showing white and graceful above the new gown, the colour deepened in the clear olive cheeks, the finely curved mouth red with health and vigour, she said: "Now, Kilby, don't say that I look beautiful. You always say that. Lucien Hargreve would convey the idea that I was a vision

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of loveliness without so much as a definite word. That is what one calls charm. You have absolutely no charm. You are too matter of fact. You suggest nothing to the imagination. You have no mysterious reserves."

"Oh, I say, Margaret, don't talk like that to me. Keep it for Hargreve. He will know what you mean."

Margaret saw that Kilby was teased, and said good-naturedly: "Oh well, dear, we won't quarrel. You will insist on being yourself. You are nothing if not Kilby Brooke. You are such an absurd creature, that if you did not take yourself seriously you might be laughed at. Do you want to go with me into the carriage? I can drop you at your street corner. Or would you prefer to stay and take dinner with father or mother? They would be glad to have you."

"I will go with you." He put on his overcoat and followed Margaret to her carriage.

Three years before Brooke had asked Margaret to marry him. She refused him, and he went down with a low fever. When he recovered he went back to Margaret like some poor faithful dumb creature, to the hand that had struck it. She permitted him to take his old place, because she thought that a man who had had a low fever on her account was entitled to some consideration. One of his friends said to him: "The next time it will be brain fever, Kilby."

"There won't be any next time," Kilby replied.

"Oh, then, you are sure that she won't refuse you again?"

"Miss Bartram will not refuse me again," Kilby said in his slow, sententious way, "because I shall not ask her again."

Not a day passed but Kilby was at the Bartrams', if only for half an hour. He did not often see Margaret alone, but he was satisfied if he only saw her at a distance, or could talk to some one who knew her.

Kilby had other trials besides those which his loving cost him. When he came of age, which occurred two or three years ago, his allowance was stopped, he was plunged into mercantile business on the sink or swim principle, and told to strike out for himself. That was Mr. Brooke's idea of making a man of his only son. Kilby tried honestly to come up to his father's expectations, but his salary was wholly inadequate to supply what he had learned to regard as the necessaries of life.

His debts piled up and up, and when they reached a certain point they periodically toppled over, and bore him down under their accumulated weight. The last crash had been so terrific that Mr. Brooke was forced to come to his son's rescue. The stern old man sat before the pile of bills; Kilby stood there, very grave, very dignified.

"Your tailors' bills I expected to have to pay—it would be too much to ask you to clothe yourself," Mr. Brooke said, with biting sarcasm, turning over the discreditable pile of paper, "but flowers at thirty shillings a dozen, two or three times a week, seem to me an extravagance which I should not be called upon to settle. And confections—look at this bill. The girl must live on confections—of course, it is Margaret Bartram. Really, Kilby, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Kilby looked depressed. He was sorry, but he did not see how he could help it. Margaret had to have those things—that was all about it.

"Well, I will help you out this time. But the next time they may sue you, do your hear?"

The fact was that had not the bills expressed Kilby's devotion to Margaret Bartram, it would have gone much worse with him. Mr. Brooke looked upon Kilby's love for Margaret as his one saving grace, and he secretly cherished the hope that some day his worthless son might win the girl, who, even to the prim and precise old man, was hardly less admirable than Kilby thought her.

It had been some time since Kilby's last unpleasant interview with his father. He had made a weak attempt at curtailing expenses, but he could not persevere in any resolution, however worthy in itself, that so nearly affected what he considered Margaret's welfare. The bills accumulated silently and unobtrusively, like a snowstorm in a night, and one day Kilby was confronted with a scene of widespread desolation. He was blue when he called on Margaret Bartram that evening.

"What is it, Kilby? Have you had another row with your father over your debts?" Margaret asked compassionately.

"No, but there is a fine one in prospect. It will have to come, Margaret. I don't mind it so much on my own account, but the old gentleman always seems so cut up."

"It is too bad. Do you know, Kilby, I have an idea. I am going to help you to save. I know how most of the money goes, you foolish boy. Those last Gloire de Dijon were twenty-five shillings. I priced them. You told me that they cost you a mere song. You must have alluded to one of Calvé's or Melba's. But I am not going to scold."

Margaret talked to him seriously. She took his shortcomings so much to heart that he solemnly promised to try and get out of debt and live within his income. When he rose to go, he said: "By the way, I have some tickets for the opera to-morrow night. I felt so blue I had to do something."

"Oh, Kilby!" she exclaimed in a shocked voice.

"They are paid for. I don't expect to be blue every day. A fellow couldn't stand it, you know."

Margaret looked thoughtful.

"If I go with you, it must be on my own terms. There must be no carriage. We will go in the 'bus, and if you send me flowers I will throw them in the street."

"Oh, come, I am not such a beggar as that!" he exclaimed, with a look of wounded pride.

"I don't say you are. But it is to be your first lesson in saving—a mere matter of discipline, as your father would say."

Margaret saw that Kilby was really suffering when he called for her the next day and saw her in her quiet walking costume instead of the usual elaborate toilette.

"Now don't be foolish, Kilby," she said. "I think it is a great lark, and we are not to have any chaperon. Mother says she does not feel well enough to go to-night. Of course, it is the 'bus."

Margaret was never in a happier mood. She felt a peculiar sense of elation as she sat beside Kilby in the stalls in her unpretentious costume. If she had been in an analytical frame of mind, which she was not, she would have probably found that it sprang from her having come unexpectedly upon a new capacity in herself—that of self-sacrifice. She had refused a box and a carriage for this very opera to give Kilby his first lesson in saving.

When the performance was over, they were surprised to find a rainy sky and wet pavements awaiting them. They had no umbrella.

"You will have to let me get you a cab," Kilby said decidedly.

"No, I will not. It would be such a failure—our first attempt. Now, Kilby, if you love me, don't get a cab," Margaret said, almost in tears.

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"But you may get your feet wet and get your death of cold," he said, in an agony of apprehension. But he was forced to let her have her own way. When the rain abated they started out, but they did not reach home until a sharp shower had caught them and wetted them thoroughly.

Margaret let Kilby pull off her wet gloves, and gave him her hand for a longer interval than usual when he said good-night, promising, with a mischievous air that mocked his solemnity, to follow minutely his urgent directions as to draughts and mustard footbaths before going to bed, and do all that she could to escape the imminent danger of pneumonia or rapid consumption.

The next day, when Kilby sent his clothes to be pressed and his hat to be ironed, he said, with a satisfied smile, "Margaret is a dear."

Margaret did not weaken in her determination to help Kilby to save. She denied herself many an invitation that she might teach Kilby to have an inexpensive evening at home. Kilby was very happy. He told Margaret that he had never suspected that the mere saving of money could become so fascinating, and that he feared that it would end in his becoming a miser. But after a while a cloud crossed his serene sky. Kilby had something on his mind. Margaret saw it in his eyes, his abstracted manner. One evening he came without the invariable flower in his buttonhole.

"Kilby," Margaret exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"It is nothing. Let me have one of those roses. Whose are these, dear—Brown's, Hargreve's, or some other fellow's? They are lucky to be able to give them to you," he said, carefully adjusting the rose in his buttonhole, and thereby regaining somewhat of his mental equilibrium.

The truth was that Kilby was under a great strain. Margaret's birthday was approaching. He had always shown his remembrance of that sacred anniversary. This birthday must be no exception—that he was determined upon—but how to get a suitable gift without going into debt for it was a new problem. He had never done it before. He could not break his word to Margaret—that was clear. He struggled on alone under his heavy burden. He forgot his flower altogether after a while, and grew pale and thin. Margaret respected his silence and never questioned him.

On the eventful day, Margaret received a heavily-chased card-case, with the donor's compliments and best wishes for many happy returns of the day, from Mr. Kilby Brooke. When he called to express his congratulations in person, Margaret treated him with extreme frigidity, and did not mention his gift.

"Margaret, you are angry about the card-case," he said, fixing his calm, affectionate eyes upon her.

"Yes, I am. I should have sent it back were it not for the monogram. As it is, I shall never use it."

"I thought you were a man of your word. From this day I give you up entirely. You may pile up your debts mountain high for all I care."

Angry tears were in her eyes. Then she added forcibly, under an impulse to say the cruellest thing possible, "I don't see how you've got credit for it!"

"I did not—I paid for it," he said, with a deeply injured air.

"You paid for it! Where did you get the money? I suppose it's nothing to you that you promised me never to borrow again."

"I did not borrow. I saved that money, Margaret, every penny of it."

"You did! Oh, Kilby, I am so sorry. Don't you believe me?" Then after a moment's thought she said gently: "But don't you think it would have been wiser to let the money go towards clearing off the debts?"

He stared at her blankly: "Why, I did not save the money for that purpose. I saved it for the card-case. You can't eat your cake and have it," he said, as if uttering a self-evident truth.

"Tell me just how you got the money together," she said smiling, and making him sit down on the couch beside her.

"Well, there was the carriage we saved, and the sweets. Why, the money fairly piled up, dear."

Margaret looked a little mystified, but as she knew that she had not a very good head for figures, she let her doubt go unexpressed. He did not tell her that for the last month or so he had done without cigars and weekly papers (his choicest literature), and lived on two meals a day, and walked instead of paying cab fare.

It was not long before Kilby again forgot his buttonhole. He looked so despairing that Margaret asked him if he was saving up for her next birthday.

"Margaret," he said desperately, "things have come to a climax. All our efforts have gone for nothing. We might as well try to keep back the ocean with a couple of mops. I have not contracted any new debts, as you know, but that has not paid off the old ones. My creditors are getting rabid. There is nothing for me to do but leave the country—and I don't know how to go, Margaret."

His voice faltered—he recklessly smoothed his hair the wrong way, quite obliterating the even parting.

"Kilby, does your father like me?" Margaret asked in a liquid voice. (She knew quite well what Mr. Brooke thought of her.)

"Yes—only yesterday he said that he did not see how such a fine girl could tolerate such a fool as I am."

"If you should tell him that we are engaged, do you think he would be likely to help you?"

"Fast enough. He would not only settle my debts, but take me into business with him. He would believe in me then. He has said as much. But of course it is not to be thought of. I would not impose on an old gentleman like that. I have never done a dishonourable action, Margaret."

"Of course not. But I am in earnest. It would not be an engagement to be engaged, but an engagement to be married."

"Oh, it is not so bad as that! You are a dear to offer to make a sacrifice of yourself. It is just like you. But I cannot consent to it. I will get through somehow."

"You place me in a very awkward position," Margaret said, getting red. "You force me to tell you what, if you were not as blind as a bat, you could see for yourself. I love you, Kilby. I found it out long ago. So please tell your father, and if you have a pocket-comb about you, do for goodness sake comb your hair!" Kilby turned pale and faint. A cold perspiration broke through every pore and stood in drops on his forehead.

"Oh, Kilby, don't look like that! Anyone would think that I had refused you!" Margaret said in distress, putting out her hands and drawing him down beside her.

"Oh, Margaret, if you only knew!" was all that he could say. With a tremulous smile he bent over her and pressed his lips and his face against her hands, scattering Hargreve's last roses, which she wore at her belt in a crimson shower of petals about her feet.

Isabel J. Roberts.

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IT CAME TO PASS

BY WINIFRED GRAHAM

SUMMARY.

Charlotte, a young girl just out of the schoolroom, is married to Raymond Peel, widower, in his forty-fifth year, notwithstanding the knowledge that his past life has been a bad one. Entering London Society, she meets at Lady Logan's a young musician, Hugh Derringer, in whom she is much interested. Mrs. Donnington-Bain, an effusive American actress, calls on her husband. She tells him that an old enemy, Dr. Lynch, is in England. Mrs. Peel meets Lynch at Sandown. She calls on her *protégé*, Hugh Derringer, to learn his history, and his doctor tells her that he is dying of consumption. When driving home she again meets Dr. Lynch, who accompanies her.

CHAPTER IV.

"I have no doubt," said Charlotte, coldly, "that you are surprised at my asking you to join me. I acted on a sudden desire to question you. Why did you insult my husband? What have you against him?"

The blood was coursing rapidly through her veins, and her eyes were alight with a strange fire.

"Are you sure you wish to know?" he asked; and as he spoke she felt her hopes crumbling, and her happiness insecure.

His eyes, keen and searching, looked her through and through.

Charlotte was trembling as she replied:

"Yes. It is necessary to my future peace of mind, and I cannot for ever remain in ignorance of his past. I must learn the truth from someone. It is humiliating to seek it from a stranger, perhaps dishonourable." Her voice faltered, betraying her distress.

"Some people," said the doctor, "have almost aggressive ideas of honour."

"I will abandon the word for to-day," she declared, a hard look creeping over her face. "I ask again, what has anyone to say against Raymond Peel? When I know the worst I will defend him, but at present I am powerless."

"It is a long and painful story," replied Dr. Lynch, "and though I shudder to think you must hear it, I have no desire to screen the man whose enemy I shall be for life. Yet all I am about to tell you is the truth, 'the truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God!'"

"There is no time to lose," she said.

"You are indeed brave, Mrs. Peel, to face the bare facts, but I warn you, if you value your happiness, consider well first. Would it not be better to try and escape from these torturing doubts, and return in ignorance, content to forgive?"

"Impossible. If it kills me death would be better than a life of suspicion."

Charlotte had sealed her fate, and waited in trepidation to hear the secret. There was a pause.

"For pity's sake," she cried, "do not keep me in suspense! Whatever this revelation may be, I am prepared to face it."

"Then I must carry you back to his first marriage, of which, doubtless, you know little. His wife was an Australian, and they lived in Sydney. I was their friend. So long as he remained faithful to her she was passionately devoted to him; but I had a sister, a fair girl, young and beautiful as yourself. He loved her, and to her sorrow, poor child, she loved him in return. I cannot dwell upon the painful subject, for she was nearer and dearer to me than all else in the world—an only sister, motherless, and living under my care. God knows I would willingly have died to save her, yet absorbed with my own work I never guessed the tragedy being acted under my very eyes. I suspected nothing, until Raymond Peel's wife, discovering his infidelity, was so completely overpowered by jealousy that she practically lost her reason. She was a good woman till he woke the devil in her. Smarting from her injuries, and maddened by hatred, she robbed him of the life that had come between them. Making no secret of her ghastly crime, the murderess gloried to the last in her cold-blooded revenge, and the little sister whom I loved was sacrificed, the victim of a cruel fate!"

An exclamation of horror escaped Charlotte's blanched lips. Dr. Lynch bent his head in his hands, hiding the expression on his face.

Where had she ordered the coachman to drive? Ah! yes, she remembered now. They were turning into the Park, and the gay world masquerading in smiling guise, contrasted strangely with the bitterness of sorrow. She sat far back to avoid scrutiny, endeavouring to penetrate the space of years, and living with Raymond through that haunting chapter of his career, in which he had sinned and suffered punishment.

"There is something more," said Dr. Lynch. "Long after I had looked for the last time on the countenance of my dear dead sister, and sentence of death had been passed upon her murderess, Raymond Peel's wife lingered in prison—unhanged! Then God tried her for her life, and left her living, with a new-born son, her only offspring. That was the life I pitied, the life of the murderess' child."

Charlotte roused herself as from a stupor, and became suddenly animated.

"Where is the child? What of *him?*" she asked, watching the doctor curiously.

"Raymond Peel refused to see his son. He provided for his maintenance, and the wretched mother commended her baby to the care of her sister, a thoroughly worldly woman, and most unsuitable for the charge. The boy's father stipulated that he must never learn the disgrace of his birth and parentage, and I believe to this day Mrs. Donnington-Bain has kept faithful to her promise. It is the fear that his son will seek him out and claim relationship that makes Raymond Peel so imperative on that point."

Charlotte's head sank back, and she clasped her hands in an attitude of prayer. This harrowing intelligence cast a new light upon everything.

"Then, Hugh," she murmured, apparently speaking to herself, "Hugh is my stepson, Raymond's child, his first wife's, unowned, deserted! while Mrs. Donnington-Bain is Raymond's deceased wife's sister."

Involuntarily a sensation of deep relief passed over her.

"Yes. You have much to think out Mrs. Peel, and much to forgive."

"It is a woman's mission to forgive," she replied, thinking how much easier it was to pardon this offence than the one she had suspected, since death had parted the offenders for

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twenty years. Besides, had she not sworn to love him under *any* circumstances, even though he warned her his past was evil?

"You can understand now," said Dr. Lynch, "that Mr. Peel and I could never exchange a friendly greeting—that to my dying day I shall hate the man who robbed me of my dearest earthly treasure. May the world reserve for you a better fate, Mrs. Peel, than that of your predecessor."

He seized her little gloved hand, and held it for a moment trembling within his own. Her lips quivered, she tried to speak, but her breath fled.

"Poor Dr. Lynch!" she faltered at last. "You have tasted the bitter reality of life. I was living in a dream—a very happy one!"

"God bless you in your first sorrow," he murmured, a weary sadness in his tone. He had spoken in earnest when he said, "the truth and nothing but the truth." Yet it was not the *whole* truth, for as he unfolded the past, watching the young wife's pale cheeks and dilating eyes, a horrible repulsion arrested him ere he completed the story. How could he wreck her life utterly with the words now trembling on his tongue? She had listened bravely to his tale, though her lips twitched with strong emotion. Dr. Lynch drew his hand across his brow, and a sudden dread seized her as she watched his expression.

"There is nothing more?" she gasped.

"I have finished," he replied. "Heaven knows enough has been said!"

A moment later he had alighted, and Charlotte was driving towards her home.

That evening she decided to broach the subject of Hugh Derringer's illness to her husband. It would be a difficult task thrusting her newly-acquired knowledge upon Raymond, and half an hour passed in comparative silence before she could bring herself to commence.

"Once and for all, Charlotte, let the subject drop!"

"You asked me to-day," she began, fixing her eyes on the rings of smoke from his cigarette, "why I was silent and constrained. You observed a change in me."

Raymond held out his hand to her.

"Truthfully speaking, I thought you were a little cross," he replied with a smile.

"Oh! no; only worried and anxious. Hugh Derringer is very ill."

"What have you to do with him?" he asked sharply. "Millions are suffering in the world without exciting our compassion. Their wants are nothing to us."

"But the wants of a son," she ventured timidly.

"Charlotte, what do you mean?"

"That I know all you would have hidden from me"—speaking very tenderly—"I am willing to forget the sad past, dear, utterly and entirely; only let us think what is right for the future."

"How much do you know?" he said, coldly, avoiding her eyes.

"The closing chapter of your first marriage. I learnt it from Dr. Lynch. You have neglected a life for which you are responsible, for Hugh Derringer is nevertheless your son, though you have forsaken him."

Charlotte's courage was stimulated by her husband's injustice, and she continued without wavering:

"There may be little time in which to retrieve the wrong. Your son is dying slowly but surely, in a wretched lodging, while we fatten on our dainties. It is monstrous that such things should be! You are visiting your own sin and the mother's on an utterly innocent and defenceless being."

"I make him a very good allowance," muttered Raymond, when he had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment to speak.

"Half of which is probably spent on Mrs. Donnington-Bain's back, since she is a recklessly extravagant woman—minus a conscience. The boy is consumptive, yet she leaves him to toil for his daily bread in the suffocating atmosphere of London. As soon as he will move I shall have him here."

"You would bring him *here*—under my very roof?" exclaimed her husband, confronting her with flashing eyes.

"What roof more suitable?" she asked. "Is he not your own flesh and blood?"

"But he must never know it," declared Raymond, excitedly. "I could bear anything but that!"

"Hugh, though young, is already a man of the world," she replied; "and cannot for ever be kept in ignorance. I *must* acquaint him with the mystery of his birth, though the motive of his mother's crime shall never pass my lips."

"Charlotte," he said, firmly, "the boy shall *not* come here. I couldn't stand it! Your promise was easily forgotten when put to the test, and you have broken faith with me by looking into the past."

She knitted her brows, and her face changed.

"The knowledge came to me," she said; "and I accepted it in a forgiving spirit, believing I might influence you to redeem the wrong. I thought you were man enough to face your faults, and take back your son. Instead, I find you imbued with a selfish desire to hide your neglected child from the world, clinging still to outward esteem, at the loss of self-respect. Raymond, I cannot banish this cloud and remain with you unless you consent to own him. That alone is my condition."

Charlotte spoke hotly, yet she looked so helpless, so beseeching, that he did not believe her threat.

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Unconquerable anger took possession of him, as he struck the table heavily with his fist.

"Once and for all, Charlotte, let the subject drop!"

She did not reply, but, with a crushed look of disappointment left the room, closing the door very softly.

With a crushed look of disappointment left the room.

For many hours Raymond sat gloomily contemplating this fresh turn of events, and it was late into the night before he became alarmed at Charlotte's non-appearance.

"She could not have spoken in earnest," he thought, rising as from a stupor.

At first he went from room to room, momentarily expecting to meet his wife, till suddenly a terrible dread seized him, and calling her loudly by name, Raymond hurried hither and thither in a frenzy of despair. When he discovered she was no longer in the house, the truth of her words dawned on him. He had lost her love. He had lost a wife.

All that night he waited, sleepless and distracted, the victim of an overpowering remorse; but Charlotte did not return. Was this to be the disastrous consequence of his decision? If so, his punishment was harder than he could bear.

Early on the following day, his face worn and furrowed by anxiety, Raymond called upon Mrs. Donnington-Bain, only to be told she could not see him for three hours, as she did not rise until twelve. Before that time, however, he sent an urgent letter, imploring for an interview.

Augusta received him swathed in a loose silk wrapper, her hair flowing below her waist.

"You cruel man to drag me from my slumbers!" she cried, jestingly.

"Give me Hugh Derringer's address," he said, ignoring her remark. "I think Charlotte may be there, and I want to fetch the boy home. Quick! the address—do you hear?"

"Fetch him home!"

Surely, she thought, Raymond could not intend robbing her of the comfortable allowance she had so long shared with her unsuspecting nephew?

"Well, you *are* a specimen!" she declared, looking him up and down. "Whatever is the matter?"

"I have no time to answer questions, and I want my son's address."

"This is a fresh phase of imbecility, Raymond, which I really cannot humour."

"Augusta, for Heaven's sake drop your bantering! Can't you see I'm in earnest? I mean to make amends."

"Oh! a penitent!" laughed she. "Then why come to me? Do I look like a Father Confessor?"

"Will you or will you not give me his address?"

"No, you old humbug! It is nothing but despicable curiosity. You want to sneak round and *see* the boy unrecognised. Well, it is not my fault if his surroundings are hardly aristocratic. He gets the money right enough."

Augusta spoke unblushingly, with eyes fixed upon his face.

"I don't doubt it, but in the future all will be different. I mean to make a clean breast of it, for Charlotte's sake."

"You can find him yourself," she hissed, sweeping from the room.

Then commenced an active search, after which Raymond finally procured the desired address from Lady Logan, and hastened to the baker's shop in a state of nervous trepidation.

"Is Mr. Derringer at home?" he asked.

"No, sir; he left this morning with a lady. He is not returning."

A terrible look of distress passed over Raymond's face.

"Did you know the lady's name?"

"Yes, sir. He spoke to her as Mrs. Peel."

Raymond's eyes stared before him with a fixed expression of despair.

"Where did they go?" he questioned, anxiously, pausing breathless for her reply.

"I do not know, but they talked of leaving England," said the woman in the baker's shop.

CHAPTER V.

Raymond Peel sickened with fear and doubt, as he staggered from the baker's door, dazed by the astounding news of his wife's flight. At first he could hardly grasp the meaning, and beads of perspiration gleamed on his forehead, while misery numbed his nerves into a half unconscious state.

A drunken man reeling down the street lurched against him.

"She is far away on the ocean wave!" he shouted to the tune of a popular music-hall air. Raymond listened, arrested by some horrible fascination, till the words sank into a mumble, and the unsteady figure vanished down the street. He shivered as he glanced with repulsion at the house in which his son had lodged, and hastened on. It was humiliating—horribly humiliating! With dogged obstinacy he determined to seek Augusta once again, convinced she knew more than she cared to own. Prepared not to be admitted, he resorted to stratagem, and gave the name of her manager, which brought Mrs. Donnington-Bain smiling into his presence. Her countenance changed as she caught sight of him, and a hardened expression compressed the lips that a moment since were parted with spontaneous greeting. She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

Dr. Lynch.

"Why have you returned?" she asked.

"Why?" replied Raymond, with sudden fierceness. "Didn't I tell you I wanted my son? Now I want my wife. They are both missing."

"Lost, stolen, or strayed?" cried Augusta, a cruel laugh escaping her. "You are simply a mass of contradictions, Raymond, neglecting the boy from his cradle, and then howling because he happens to be out when you call."

The anxiety he had struggled to repress now made itself clearly felt as he paced the room, his fingers nervously interlaced, and his head bent.

"I tell you, Augusta, Charlotte knows all!"

"*All?*" exclaimed Mrs. Donnington-Bain, suddenly.

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"Yes. She learnt the details of my wife's death, and the reason for the murder. Lynch divulged it! She besought me to own my son, but I refused. Ah! I know it was cowardly; and that same night she left me. I believe she has gone abroad with Hugh Derringer. If you have heard anything of all this, for the sake of the good that is in you, don't keep it from me!"

"I am not as indifferent as I seem," she replied, with a graceful shake of her well-poised head. "But supposing I told you I am utterly unacquainted with the movements of your erratic young wife—what then?"

"It is impossible the boy could leave England without your knowledge, since he is dependent on you for money; unless, as I begin to imagine, he lives upon his own energies, and the allowance goes elsewhere."

"Since when have you developed these absurd suspicions?" she retorted, a sneer curling her lip.

"Since this morning," answered Raymond, ceasing his quick, even strides, and standing rigidly upon the hearth-rug.

"You want rest and sleep," Augusta declared, "for Mrs. Peel's playful little whims have evidently affected your brain. You are over-wrought, my dear Raymond. Take an effervescing mixture to cool you down, and go to bed; things will right themselves in a day or two."

The calmer she grew the more exasperated he became.

"I do not believe I am wronging you," he said. "At any rate, since you are unable to help me, and Hugh Derringer has left England without a word, the money will cease immediately, Augusta, understand that."

A flush rose over her cheek, creeping down the delicate curves of her throat.

"You dare not stop it," she hissed, with a sudden intaking of her breath. "I say you dare not, Raymond Peel! Do you forget you are in my hands, utterly and entirely? You will double the payment if I choose."

A dead cold pallor stole across his face.

"Look here," he said, sharply. "What do you mean?"

"That the world is still in ignorance of your identity. Your past discreditable history is known to Dr. Lynch and myself alone. He will not mention it to slur his dead sister's character. But I am bound by no such tie."

"Have *you* not a dead sister also?"

Augusta's face twitched. Raymond thought it looked almost ugly for a moment.

"Her memory is blackened already by crime. When sentence of death was passed upon her you had not even the nerve to wait until your child was born. After arranging with me for its maintenance you left the country, and hid your grief in the wilds of Africa. Finally you took your passage to England under a new name, and have lived here ever since."

"It seemed like beginning life again," he said.

"Be sure your sin will find you out," quoted Augusta, mockingly. "It is difficult to bury a living child, and harder still to escape from a hidden past. So long as you are in the world, the days that have been will cast a reflection on the days to come. You are a pitiful creature, Raymond, and for the sake of your pretty, wilful Charlotte I do not wish to drag your name through the mire; but I cannot honestly afford to keep silence for nothing. Leaving Hugh Derringer out of the question, that allowance must continue."

"You demand hush-money? I should not have thought a woman of your spirit could have sunk so low."

"Perhaps not. We live and learn. Now, let me recommend you change of air, for this room is unhealthily hot, and doubtless your carriage is waiting."

But Raymond was not to be put off so easily.

"Before I go," he said, "can you swear you know nothing of their movements, that you are not tricking me with lies, and merely feigning ignorance?"

"I would swear anything to be rid of you, *mon ami!*"

"Augusta, you are the most exasperating woman that ever trod this earth."

"Yet, still a woman, and, therefore, naturally inclined to torment mankind, for women were made to give trouble. They live and revel in the fact till life ebbs out of their bodies, and a handful of dust in a mouldering coffin is all that is left of the dear distracting creatures."

She laughed as she spoke, though Raymond's clear-cut, hard-featured face grew dark with hatred.

"Are you at the bottom of this or not?" he muttered, rather speaking his thoughts aloud than questioning.

"You men are so persistent that you end by gaining your way. Once and for all, then, I know——"

"What?" he asked eagerly, as she paused, glancing at him from the corners of her eyes.

"*Nothing!*"

His hope kindled for a moment, sinking with a muttered curse. The faint fleck of colour that had risen to his cheek faded away, and he moved mechanically to the door.

"May I offer you a glass of liqueur brandy?" cried Mrs. Donnington-Bain, laying her hand on his sleeve. He drew his arm sharply away, while the sternness in his eyes deepened.

"I hardly know whether to laugh or cry!" Augusta continued. "You are half tragic and half grotesque."

"You have always seen humour in tragedy, and tragedy in humour," he replied.

Raymond called upon Mrs. Donnington-Bain.

"Alas! I am compelled to, or I could not live!"

He refused her outstretched hand, and turned silently away.

Raymond Peel looked ten years older as he left the hotel.

That night he mentally re-acted his interview with Augusta, and came to a conclusion. He would refuse to leave himself in her power and be stretched for ever on the rack. Charlotte knew the worst—why not then the whole world? *She* was *his* world—his all in life! What cared he for any other? If his heart must be torn out, the carrion vultures might scream their miserable story at will!

"I was mad," he thought, "to momentarily contemplate bribing Augusta."

So he wrote Mrs. Donnington-Bain a curt letter, and dispatched it that same evening.

A singular smile played round her lips as she scanned its contents.

"He little knows his adversary!" she said, opening her desk and drawing a sheet of paper towards her. "Poor fool! Does he fancy I have only one weapon!"

Then she wrote with firm, unflinching fingers:

DEAR RAYMOND,

It is only fair to warn you before blackening your character, that I have a graver, more terrible secret in the background, which I think you would give your whole fortune to conceal. I shall not act hastily, as I wish you to have time to recover your senses, and meet my terms. I can faithfully assure you that this is no brag, and believe me I hold you in the hollow of my hand.

Your friend—or enemy?

AUGUSTA DONNINGTON-BAIN.

"Does the woman think me crazy?" exclaimed Raymond, flinging the letter in the fire.

So Mrs. Donnington-Bain waited fruitlessly for the result of her bomb-shell.

(To be continued.)

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THE MOUNTAIN VALKYRIE

WHERE the rough mountain road led up from the valley beneath it turned abruptly into a narrow gorge, and there, in the dusk of the falling evening, Kendal Trance came upon a strange scene. At first he scarcely distinguished the two figures and the respective attitudes they held. He saw an arm raised, saw it descend with most astonishing vigour, then, urging on his horse, he was at the side of the combatants, and faced the slim youth and the tall, massive girl, blonde and muscular as a Norse war goddess, whose round arm, firm as marble in the twilight (her coarse homespun sleeve was turned up from the elbow), had hurled itself against the youth's head.

"For shame!" cried Kendal Trance, who knew the youth, a pitiful fellow enough; "what's the meaning of this?"

But it was the girl who replied, standing there with heaving chest and a frown dark as midnight upon her straight brows.

"He kin let me be after this," she remarked, scowling towards the victim of her own magnificent strength. "I cuffed him till he'll recognise it when he sees me next!"

"Did you insult this girl?" came quickly from Kendal. The girl looked up at him in the dusk. His face had a pallor under the brim of his slouch hat.

"I kin help myself if he did!" she suddenly spoke, the defiance of her mood turning largely against this would-be defender. "I don't want none o' your jawin'." And she was gone with a bound, in the thicket of the hillside.

"Aw! she be a fury," muttered the chastised delinquent, after her. "That's what Se'cashy be!—What I done anyways? I grabbed her ez she was a-walkin' 'long, jest fur a kiss. She's owin' it ter me, fer she knows she's set me crazy with those eyes o' hern; an' I done axed for it; and when she turned about on me I sees sparks, and I grabbed her, and she flung out! Aw, she be a fury!"

"Serves you right. Leave her alone after this," brusquely said Kendal, spurring his horse. The sickle of the moon was coming up above the mountains. The lonely road was full of strange murmurings from the woods. Kendal Trance set his lips together. This had been one of the days when the past (not so long passed) had surged upon him till he sickened, and the details of the present life had become impossible. The revolted bitterness of his mood was distinct upon him as an evil taste in the mouth.

Two days later it was Sunday. Kendal Trance talked to the people then—they called it "preachin'"—even as he tried to teach them during the week in the schoolhouse. They straggled in—women with babies in their arms, men in muddy top-boots, carrying their guns. The doors were open, and the autumn sunshine made a pale glare without. In the blue calm of the Indian summer the red and yellow trees stood motionless. Kendal began to speak and forgot his hearers. He spoke passionately, carried on by the long pent-up stress of contending emotions within him, losing sight of his initial text, of the concrete and practical notions for every-day application, which he generally sought to instil into the dull minds of these, his ignorant fellow creatures.

While he stopped he saw the slow wonderment dawning in the eyes of his hearers as they filed out. They had understood nothing, but that impassioned poetry of speech had stirred some dormant chord within them. As he reached the door himself, he saw a tall girl in blue homespun leaning against the outside wall. She had heavy masses of blonde hair wound above a massive throat. He recognised her. It was the girl called in the mountains "Se'cashy"—the parentless girl who lived alone in the cabin in the woods, and whom he had met in the road two nights before—the girl Circassia. He nodded to her absently.

That night, as he sat under the lamp, not reading, there was a sharp tap at the door, and, before he could reply, the door was flung open, and Circassia entered. She stood an instant irresolute, her scowling glance absorbing the details of the room, its books, its papers. Then she burst forth, turning those strange blue eyes upon him:

"I want 'er learn some book stuff!" She tossed her thumb towards the books on the shelves. "I ain't never keered for book-learnin', but I want it now. Folks sez you teach ter the schule. I want 'er come," she ended, roughly.

"Very well. What makes you wish to learn now?"

"I heer you this mornin'; that's the reason why!" she said, defiantly. "I ain't ketched on ter what yer sed; but I want ter; that's why I come. Yer been't like other men 'round yere. I hates men. But I kin abide ter listen ter you."

All this she spoke with her eyes on his, and her hand still on the knob of the door. Through all her uncouth savagery, Kendal's æsthetic instinct (that cultivation of the eye which was second nature to him) perceived, as it were unconsciously, her strange beauty. The words of her pitiful, worsted admirer on the roadside two nights before, "she's set me crazy with those eyes o' hern," flashed back upon him. They were remarkable eyes. Blue-green in the lamp-light, with something inviolately

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virginal in the core of their bold brilliancy. And, even as he thought it she was gone, with a clang of the door.

And thus, with a new pupil in the mountain settlement, 3,000 feet above sea level, the winter began for the man who, at thirty, blasted in the world which had hitherto known him by an unjust suspicion, had left in revolted disgust his career and the glittering hopes of the future, and buried himself in these wilds, far from civilisation, there to lead (with such little good as he could do in passing to the ignorant humanity around him) the life of an embittered recluse.

* * * * *

The snow lingered, and the thaws were long in coming that year. A stray messenger from the nearest post-office made his way, but with difficulty, to the settlement. Thus a letter, addressed to Kendal Trance, reached its destination a week later than it should have done.

Written by a cousin, a woman (and a young woman), it began with a sort of cry of despair at the recent conditions of his life, and then eagerly broke to him the glad news. "The good news that has made us all live again, dear Kendal, and that will bring you back to us in honour, back to the place which is waiting for you, and in which we all feel that you will do great things yet!"

A full confession had finally been made by the man who, after embezzling funds belonging to a high civic charge to which he was committed, had at first cunningly contrived to throw the appearance of guilt on the younger man associated with him—on his partner in business, Kendal Trance.

Kendal Trance's reputation was now washed whiter than ever, and his fellow citizens in the rigid far Eastern town had conferred together to request his return from voluntary exile, and to receive him, when he should come, with such ovations as the place had never known. "And Lawrence and I are going to fetch you ourselves, Kendal." Thus the letter concluded. "We shall find you out in your mountain hermitage, and force you to leave it and to come back to your rightful life, with us!"

The letter reached Kendal, and was opened by him in the little school-house by the wayside. The scholars had left, the morning lesson completed; but, as he slowly raised his head, crushing the letter in his hand, he saw that he was not alone. Circassia lingered behind the others near the door. The door was open, and he could see the road outside, heavy with the spring rains and thaws. And then two figures came within his range of vision—a man in a light top-coat, a pretty woman in travelling dress, and with such gloves and boots as he had not seen for two years.

"Kendal!"

It was the writer of the letter, with her brother. She was still young; she was emotional; she had always, half-unconsciously to herself, held a place in her heart for this particular cousin, which he could at any time have taken possession of, and thus doing, have taken possession of the whole. The tears rushed to her eyes now, and she clung prettily to his shoulder a little, as he held her hand. Her brother meantime wrung Kendal's disengaged fingers in a manly grasp, and said, simply:

"Well, it's all right, old man. I needn't tell you how glad we are!"

A moment later the three were walking slowly towards the settlement. But Circassia stood by the school-door still, and watched the retreating figures.

* * * * *

The last night!

The books (Kendal's sole, real companions for two years) were packed, the boxes stood ready. The lamplight fell on the little dismantled room of the one boarded cottage of the settlement which he had made his home. He was leaving it to-morrow. He was going back to his "rightful place in life." With a sense of perfect satisfaction in that justice had been done him at last? No. He threw open the window, and leant out. The night was odorous and filled with mysterious stirrings. And the restlessness of nature was in the man's blood, likewise; a deep bitterness for the past injustice, which no reparation could now wipe away, mingled with some other feeling, of which he did not choose to analyse the constituents.

Behind him the lamplight flared up in a sudden gust of wind. The door had opened, and, as he turned, he faced Circassia.

"If it's true—true you're goin'"—her eyes swept about the room, with its glittering signs of preparation—"I got ter know it—now!"

He came slowly towards her without replying.

"They was a saying' it all over the settlement that you was—was a-goin'." Her hand went up to the neck of the homespun gown as if the light structure oppressed her, and her eyes were black in the lamplight. "And when I see her—her—that lady—yisterday—I 'lowed she'd take you with her!"

He saw her breath come fast, and then the passion within her broke loose.

"I hates her—I hates her! I hates the likes o' her, and the likes o' the man that's with her, her brother, they says! I hates 'em, and the big town you're agoin' to! I hates 'em all—all; because—because I loves you!"

Magnificently she made her confession, as the savage she was, unabashed and unafraid, with a wild sort of dignity in the imperious poise of her beautiful blonde head. She threw her love in his teeth, not as a suppliant, but as one who confers a royal favour.

"I loves you!" she repeated.

"And I—Circassia—my wild mountain bird, my beautiful savage. Circassia, my girl, I, too, love you!" he said, then, at last, with a long breath.

* * * * *

"Not going with us?" repeated Kendal Trance's pretty cousin, sitting in her travelling dress the following morning in the "hotel" of the village in the valley, five miles below the settlement.

"Not going?" she murmured, turning white; and then her brother, who, as agreed upon, had just driven up to the settlement to meet Kendal, and to bear him away, told his remarkable tale. Kendal, since the night before, had changed his mind. He would not return to civilisation now, not till he brought with him the mountain girl who, put into a boarding-school, was for two or three years to be trained to be his wife.

"His wife!"

Long the brother and sister talked, the latter trembling a little, with a great bitterness in her soul.

"But this is suicide!" she cried at length. "What can a man like Kendal do with such a girl—for you say you saw her this morning? He is mad!"

"Perhaps," said her brother, meditatively, and then, with a remembrance vivid before him of Circassia as he had seen her, for the first and last time—Circassia, beautiful and haughty as a Valkyrie—as the wild dream of a poet—he added: "I don't know, though—I don't know."

W. H.

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A MAN OF MANY WIVES

THERE were three hundred and sixty-five of them! One for every day in the year.

Nevertheless Barak was not a sultan; he was a *hageb*—that is, upper chamberlain—at the court of the Sultan Mohammed. He had come to the country as ambassador of the great Mongolian kingdom, and the widow of the late Sultan, yet young and pretty, had given him the management of her household, her son, Mohammed, being still a child.

Barak's administration was good. The army owed to him, among other reforms, the raising of the soldiers' pay from three to four aspers (pennies).

One day the Grand Vizier, Darfur Ali, visited the upright Hageb, and, while the two drank coffee, the guest began:

"Truly Barak Hageb, it is a folly unworthy of you to keep so many wives. If it was with us as the Franks the custom to give wives, you might then be as rich as King Sapor; but here you must not only buy your wife, but must pay cash for her. Now, you have squandered a great deal of gold for this purpose, and when your money is spent, what have you? For the cost of one wife you could keep a hundred soldiers."

Barak stroked his beard. "One should pick as many flowers as he can from the world's garden," he returned.

"True enough, you have blonde and brunette, white and black, blue-eyed and grey-eyed women, yellow Chinese and brown Malay—yes, and even those women that colour their hair red and their teeth black. Now, I think that one of each sort should be enough. By Allah! you have so many that you cannot remember either their names or their special good qualities."

"Don't you believe it," said Hageb. "I will show you. First, then, there is Jedibah, who can prophesy—we need her to tell the fate of the nation; then Hafitem, the medium, who calls up the spirits of the dead; Nourmahal, who understands the languages of the birds better than I do yours; Alpaide tells stories that would put a sultan to sleep; Mahadevi and Assainte are famous for a *pas de deux*. The great thing about Mangora is that she makes a sultan's bread that is exquisite. Sandabad concocts a wonderful sherbet, after which you wash your beard with regret. Zul——"

"I have heard enough, you need every one of them—each has evidently her famous side. Take care, lest some day you discover an infamous one."

Whether the Grand Vizier was right or not the following story will show.

The Sultan of Kermau, Sidi Achmed, hearing Mohammed's people were discontented, decided to liberate them from their oppression. To alleviate the sufferings of his neighbours has always been a labour of love to Oriental rulers.

Sidi Achmed commanded an immense army. Some Persian historians say he had ten thousand soldiers; others insisted that he had one hundred thousand; the truth probably lay somewhere between the two. Certain it is that he had three hundred cavalrymen.

Before declaring war he raised the pay of the troops

While the two drank coffee.

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from four to five aspers. This naturally caused universal enthusiasm.

Sidi Achmed was at the head of the army, himself and his horse loaded with precious stones. The sight of them caused a glow of righteous pride in every barefooted warrior who turned out. The Sultan took with him the most costly delicacies, and the thought that the Sultan fared sumptuously went far to cheer the hungry soldiers.

Mohammed also had an enormous standing army. The Grand Vizier Darfur Ali was appointed commander.

The night before the first battle, one of Barak's wives, the Jedibah of whom we have already heard, prophesied that the neighbouring kingdom would be destroyed; and Roxana, who also dabbled in fortune-telling, predicted that on the next day Sidi Achmed would die.

These predictions were made public in the principal city, and there was in consequence universal enthusiasm.

Barak himself was firmly convinced that both would be fulfilled, and he and his entire following of women occupied, the next day, a hill above the battle-field, in order to enjoy from that coign of vantage the amusing spectacle of the downfall of the enemy.

The battle began early in the morning, but it did not last long. In describing it the historians again differ widely. The Persian chronicle says the army of Mohammed lost forty-five thousand men, while the enemy lost but three. Another writer states that the army of Mohammed did not lose a man, while the opponent lost thirty-three thousand. Perhaps in this case, also, the real truth lies half-way between the two statements. All agree that the army of Mohammed speedily gave leg-bail, and proved that no one could catch them.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" cried Barak Hageb, seeing the flight of his soldiery, "I almost think Jedibah's prophecy is not going to be fulfilled. On the contrary, our own country appears to be lost."

"Have patience," murmured the prophetess, consolingly; "the sun has not yet sunk into the sea."

The observation being just, Barak philosophised no more, but spurred his horse, and, with his spouses, sought safety in flight.

Sidi Achmed had heard of Barak's wealth and of his wives, and so soon as he was informed of the flight he hastened in pursuit. Until late in the afternoon two dust-clouds might be seen, one chasing the other; the one beaten up by Barak Hageb and his wives, the other by the troopers of Sidi Achmed.

"By the holy apron of the Prophet's wife," growled Barak, "Roxana's prognostication likewise fails to be fulfilled. I shall be the dead man to-day, and not Sidi Achmed."

"The stars are not yet visible," replied the white Roxana. "There near yonder pond we will take rest. You may take your evening bath and pray; let the rest be our care."

In the meantime the women were not idle. When Barak returned from his evening devotions he found instead of his pious family of wives, an army of bearded troopers. Great at first was his fright, for the warriors were of fearful aspect.

The women had cut off the manes and tails of their horses, and had made themselves false beards. From a neighbouring grove they had cut bamboo canes, to the ends of which they attached their tiny daggers, making thereby elegant lances.

Yarko the Tartar, and Zibella the Indian, commanded the gentle cavalry. The troopers were divided into three divisions.

Sidi Achmed came on in wild haste; as soon, however, as he saw these warriors, whose long beards swept down to their stirrups, his heart failed him. At once a portly hero rode up to him, calling him to come forth to single combat.

This was Zibella, so expert with the knife that she could split a hair at twelve paces. The very first throw of her lance killed Sidi Achmed.

Under the guidance of the Tartar Yarko, the other Amazons now pressed upon the enemy. The troopers of Sidi Achmed were but lukewarm. Five pennies is a nice sum, but it hardly pays for a hole in one's hide. Each of these fellows, therefore, took his shield upon his back, and fled as fast as his feet could carry him.

Barak Hageb was touched.

The head of the Sultan was struck from his body, and stuck on the point of a lance. With this token of triumph, the party pressed on to Kermau. The city gates were cheerfully opened, for now everybody knew that Sidi Achmed was a tryant; while Barak Hageb was praised as the liberator of the nation, and was finally asked to be its Sultan.

Barak Hageb assembled his wives and said to them: "Glorious women, I thank you for my life. Yes, I have more to thank you for: my fame and my kingdom. Name, then, the reward you desire; I swear by Allah to grant it."

Then came forward Zibella, and spoke:

"O, great Sultan, we do, indeed, deserve a reward, for we have fought for you like men. We ask nothing small, therefore; we ask for freedom, and our desire is that all the women in your kingdom shall be as free as men."

Barak Hageb was touched; very much touched; he shed tears. Then he said:

"You ask for something unheard of—something that has never yet been. Yet it must be, for I have sworn. In Kermau, from this time forth, woman is as free as man, and the wives of Barek Hageb may proclaim that they have gained this freedom by their own efforts."

And so the new sultan won the hearts of his people, and even in the neighbouring realms his fame increased.

All the sultans round claimed his friendship and solicited his kinship.

The makers of marriages beseiged his house; even the Sultan Mohammed, at whose court Barak had once been ambassador, offered him sisters and cousins.

To him Barak replied: "I choose neither your sisters nor yet your cousins, for I want not frivolity, but rather wisdom. If you really desire to be kinsman of mine, give me for wife—your mother."

And so it happened.

After having had three hundred and sixty-five wives, he contented himself with one, and found it enough.

E. Duval.

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BRONSON GRANBY owned little but his name. His coat was threadbare, his hat could scarcely hold its own; those portions of his scanty linen visible at wrists and throat were so frayed and torn that the clipping treatment bade fair to prove annihilation, and of his boots so little individuality remained one might well scoff at the popular fallacy, that to those who wore shoes it was as if the whole earth was covered with leather. In truth, despite their outward respectability, only the shadows of soles intervened between his weary feet and the rough road he travelled; the leather was a thing of the past.

Tall and gaunt was Bronson Granby; he held himself painfully erect, as if fearful that the slightest relaxation would prove his undoing. His grey hair, worn a trifle long, was brushed back from his broad forehead, and to a physiognomist the strongly marked face, with its deep-set piercing eyes, was one never to be forgotten.

Of course he had a history—everyone has for the matter of that—but Bronson Granby had never quite finished his first chapter. He had, from his precocious childhood, a most inventive mind, which only a solid education and strict discipline could transform into practical usefulness. This, however, was not his portion, and the great schemes by which, as he fondly imagined, the thinking world would be swayed, proved as delusive as Fortune herself, who smiled upon him from afar, but vanished as he drew near.

"But a few hundreds in my hand," he would say, with an expressive motion of the long, thin, nervous member, "and I might make a million—more or less."

Alas! it was always less, for the hundreds had been squandered, and at fifty—worn, emaciated, an old man in the very prime of life—he still waited, with the same impatience of thirty years ago, the granting of his first patent. He had either been too far ahead of the times, or too late in filing his application; or, what is still more probable, his mechanical appliances never fairly illustrated his broad conceptions. But the fact remained, and this man, who was, as it were, the fountain-head of so many brilliant possibilities that died at their birth, hovered about the sacred precincts of the Patent Office, striving in vain for that spell, the "open sesame," without which he could never enter the wonder-world of fame.

He was well known, and regarded by those who watched him come and go with unfailing regularity as somewhat of a crank. But, still undaunted by repeated failure, he lingered in London year after year, held there, doubtless, by some vague, dim hope of better things. He managed somehow to pick up a scanty living, crumbs dropped by busy officials, a scrap of writing, an odd job here and there; anything to turn an honest penny was not beneath Bronson Granby. And in the meantime, there was *the invention*, the culmination of all his best endeavours and high aims. There it was, tested and approved by competent judges, awaiting recognition!

One evening at dusk, when March was at its windiest, the Inventor, wrapped in an old cloak, that, like himself, had seen better days, issued forth to brave the elements. It was raining a fine unpleasant drizzle, which the blast caught up and turned into sleet, that came driving against the venturesome wayfarer; but though Bronson Granby's slight figure swayed like a reed in the hurricane which met him at every crossing, he struggled on with unabated energy, until finally he stood before a massive looking dwelling, situated a little beyond the fashionable limits of the city, yet distinguished by a certain air of dignity and repose, as if it had descended from father to son for many generations. He steadied himself for a moment against an iron railing which inclosed the mansion; then he mounted the broad steps and rang the bell.

Yes, Mr. Curtis was at home, and had ordered that the gentleman be shown to the library at once. The stately footman eyed "the gentleman" doubtfully, but Granby's manner repelled impertinent curiosity, so he led the way in silence, and opened the library door with that gentle flourish peculiar to his calling.

In the subdued light shed by the soft glow of a lamp, the Inventor saw a gentleman seated at a large table, busily engaged in writing. He looked up as Granby entered, and their eyes met in cold recognition.

"You sent for me," said Granby, in a low voice.

"I did," replied the other composedly, "though I hardly expected so speedy a compliance with my request. It is long since we met, twenty-five years at the very least. You are changed, Bronson."

"Yes; time has dealt more gently with you." Bronson spoke with repressed bitterness as he glanced at the unlined face with its clear-cut features.

"You forget this," and Curtis smiled as he passed his hand lightly over his silvery hair. The graceful gesture irritated his visitor, who moved impatiently.

"You must be tired," said Gordon Curtis, "pray take that easy chair. I trust you have not come on foot this awful night?"

"It was scarcely dark when I left the place I call home," answered Granby, sinking with real exhaustion into the proffered chair. "The distance is great, but I walk in all seasons and in all weather."

"Shall I ring for wine?" His voice expressed only the coldest courtesy.

"Thank you—no," said Bronson Granby hastily. "You sent for me?" he reiterated. "In what way can I serve you?"

"Serve me!" Curtis allowed the full inflection of sarcasm to dwell in the echo. "*I* rather thought to serve *you*."

"It is the same thing," retorted the other.

"I have heard of your latest invention," pursued Curtis imperturbably. "and being, in my poor way, ranked among men of science, I thought my opinion might be of value to you." He paused for some

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acknowledgment, but none came. "Have you the instrument with you?" he questioned.

"Your note expressed a desire to see it," said the Inventor, in his direct way. "I have it with me in consequence."

He drew from beneath his cloak a box of medium size and placed it on the table.

"And all your life, your energy, your privation, and your poverty are compressed in those dimensions," observed the host, with a shade of contempt upon his handsome face.

"Say, rather, my ambition, Gordon Curtis, which rises above such sordid considerations."

"True; but I doubt if your ambition has accomplished the ascendency you boast of. I mean no taunt, Bronson. I am only moralising on the different roads we travel. I fancy I have been more prudent than you, as the world takes it. I am a philosopher in my way, dealing with life's most complex problems, on paper. I invent, too, in a manner. I fashion theories with my pen, and they have brought me golden harvests. I cannot always practice what I preach—what matter! I do not set myself upon a pedestal. I merely expound natural and moral laws to the public as I would interpret them to myself if I had time to live again. Doubtless, you have read my article on 'High and Low Pressure?' No! I will give you a copy. And now I will examine your invention, if you will kindly show it to me."

Granby winced under the patronising tone, but without a word he proceeded to expose his treasure to the philosopher's critical gaze.

There was little to be seen. A copper sphere about the size of a toy balloon was prolonged at either pole into a hollow tube a yard long and half an inch in diameter. To one end was attached a metal top, which opened and shut according to the regulations of an ingenious contrivance at the other extremity; a diminutive engine worked by a small electric battery.

The whole apparatus occupied but an insignificant space on the table, yet it was perfect in every detail, and Curtis, as he sat coolly watching both the Inventor and invention, acknowledged this, even while he wondered how those nervous, trembling fingers could be trained to such nicety and precision. He was still more surprised to see Bronson Granby suddenly throw off his gloom and begin to speak with eager enthusiasm.

"The plan is very simple. The object, as you know, is to temper the atmosphere, for which purpose let us suppose that we need the instrument to reduce the temperature in an over-heated room. Well, then our first care is to indicate upon the meter you see here the number of degrees you wish. Fifteen below freezing is the limit of my experiments, though I believe it could stand a much stronger test, and also, by reversing the action of the engine, which requires the opening of another valve, a room of low temperature could be heated to an indefinite number of degrees. Of course, my delineation is rough. Materials of the proper sort are expensive, and I have been forced to construct my engine of inferior metal and in the face of a thousand drawbacks."

"You have done fairly well, I think." The Philosopher spoke in a ruminative way, with his eyes fixed upon the instrument and his brows drawn together in deep thought. "Yet I firmly believe, if you would follow my suggestion, your invention would be more than useful. It would be invaluable. I am, as I said before, a man of theories. I can explain the process of improvement in your design, though the mechanical appliance of the principle is far beyond me. For this reason I sent for you. I know that your pride, or rather, resentment, which has estranged us for a quarter of a century, could be broken only through an appeal to your dearest ambition. I am thus frank with you because, in seeking your aid in the project I have in view, I want to be sure that something more than pecuniary interest binds us."

Curtis looked straight at his visitor, but despite his seeming unreserve, Granby felt that something was hidden, and he resented the calm dissecting glance of those cold grey eyes.

"I cannot quite fathom your motive," he said, with real dignity in voice and manner, "nor what you wish of me; but understand once for all, I will be led into nothing blindfolded. I can justly measure your influence over me, yet I warn you not to go too far. It has been my destiny to play the puppet in more than one of your schemes. But remember, you may bend my spirit to your will, you cannot break it; there is a point at which it rebounds."

"My dear Bronson," observed Curtis, with just that faint shade of sarcasm he could so well assume, "does it not occur to you that you are raising a tempest in a teapot? But you were always impetuous, and I see your solitary life has not curbed the natural impatience of your disposition. You should have married, as I did."

Again Granby shrank beneath the covert taunt his words conveyed. "I am not one to break any woman's heart. I loved only once and faithfully."

Whatever sting may have lurked in his retort, the Philosopher might have been incased in glass for all the impression that it seemed to make. A strange gleam flashed in his eyes, but it was gone directly, and Curtis, leaning back in his easy-chair, evinced not the slightest trace of emotion.

"There!" he exclaimed soothingly, as if humouring a wayward child. "I have roused unpleasant associations; forgive me, and now let us be strictly practical. I have heard your invention favourably discussed by men of science. I approve of it highly. As you say, it is crude, but possessed of capabilities far above what has hitherto been within the range of human power—further than even you have conceived. Your design performs a wonderful task in thus administering to Nature, holding her pulse, keeping an accurate index of her respiration, but why do you stop here? why pause half-way when you might transcend the higher flight of true philanthropy? You have probed to Nature's heart. Have you ever considered how much more accessible are Nature's children—plants, animals, and human beings—and how you might regulate their inward temperature through a diminished reproduction of your instrument?"

Granby had listened attentively. His flushed and animated countenance looked positively handsome as this vision of fame and glory was subtly spread before him. New worlds to conquer still cried out to him, despite the record of lost battles.

"I see," he cried eagerly. "You wish me to try my experiment in your province—mankind. How and for what reason I am as yet ignorant. I cannot work in the dark."

"Nor do I wish it. You interpret my object correctly. I have spent much time in studying the complex passions that sway my kind, and have come to the conclusion that if the animal force within us—heat, you might call it, or cold, as the case may be—were tempered by intellectual force from without, fine and delicate, yet

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powerful enough to penetrate the human fabric, and work its way to the recesses of the mind and soul, the most astounding results would be produced."

Granby followed every word with kindling enthusiasm. The man was completely submerged in the inventor, whose active brain had already fashioned the outlines of a noble work, and as Curtis stopped to note the effect of his plausible argument, he was startled at the energy and vivacity which swept away a dozen years from the stooping shoulders.

"Only give me time," he cried, "and I may yet be famous."

"And rich," added the Philosopher.

"Gordon Curtis, am I so despicable as to think of money at this crisis?"

"Yet it is useful," said Curtis musingly; "in its base way, of course. I have found it so." He glanced at his luxurious surroundings, and leisurely produced his cheque-book from a drawer in the table. "How much will you need for the furtherance of this scheme, Bronson?"

"I want no aid from you," said Granby irritably, though his hungry eyes followed his host's every movement.

"Nonsense!" answered the other, dipping his pen in the ink. "You cannot work with air, and I have my own reasons for desiring the success of your invention. I wish to use it—to prove its worth—to give it a place in scientific history, and you the fame you sigh for, and the wealth you so despise. What will cover your needs?"

"Are you trying to bribe me by a pen-stroke?"

"No, only through your ambition. That is vulnerable, Bronson. I hold you above all meaner motive."

"You but do me justice," said the Inventor, with a touch of bitterness. "Would to Heaven I could resist you; but you know your power."

Curtis filled out the form and pushed it across the table.

"Understand," he said, slowly, "I am not buying you either body or soul. I am earnest in my desire to add another gem to science's store, another item to my psychological experience. You are the only being who can assist me, and you must do so untrammelled by any feeling of obligation. I have your address, and will drop in upon you as your work progresses, and now," he added, touching a bell, "we will say good-night. You are tired, ride home, spare yourself physically, for your mental powers must not be overtaxed. Tomkins, show the gentleman out."

In a dazed unsteady fashion, Bronson Granby followed his guide; the vista so suddenly opened to him was vast and overwhelming. Absorbed in contemplation, he took little heed of the elegance and luxury which characterised every nook and corner of the fine old mansion; but as he passed the drawing-room, the sound of voices arrested his attention. The door was open, and in the brilliant glow of many lights, so different from the shaded seclusion of the library, the two occupants were plainly to be seen—a man and a woman, both young and handsome, and—from their low and earnest conversation, the murmur of which reached Granby as he paused half-unconsciously on the threshold—both in love. The girl was beautiful, but the Inventor's eyes only rested on her lightly for an instant, and then were riveted on the face of him who sat beside her. He grew pale as he looked, and leant against the door, as if its support were necessary. The butler roused him by a touch on his arm.

"Are you ready, sir; shall I help you with your cloak?"

"Ready? Yes. Thank you, I need no help."

With a sigh he straightened himself to his full height, drew his old cloak closely round him, grasped his treasure firmly, and the next moment found him an alien from the warmth and light, as he had ever been, buffeting with the rude elements on his way towards a tram whose bells jingled in the distance.

* * * * *

It was some days before Bronson Granby could sufficiently calm his excited fancy for the earnest work he had in view. He felt that the effort he was about to make would overtop the highest pinnacle of human conception, that it would tax all his reserve force, both mental and physical, and before he bent himself to his labour, here solved, let Fortune serve him how she would, that his crowning invention should be his last. His feeble frame, lacking the vitality of youth, would be unable to endure much longer such continual nervous pressure. Should success come to him at this late day, the remainder of his life would be passed in peaceful tranquility; if failure were again his portion, he had a presentiment that the tense cords of his being would snap asunder, and the rest he craved would be his for ever.

With these thoughts, the Inventor applied himself heart and soul to a thorough investigation of the subject with which he had to deal—the tempering of human passions by the subtle mechanism of human skill; the regulation of the blood as it surges through the veins, affecting both head and heart. The heating or cooling of the emotions, that was to be his aim, and what force so powerful as electricity to accomplish his purpose? His enthusiasm once kindled, he gave no thought to Curtis's motive in thus stimulating his ambition; he lived only in the great work, and he cared little what happened beyond his closed door so long as he was left in peace.

It was not until the Philosopher himself knocked at the forbidden portal that Granby became sufficiently alive to outside influences to answer the peremptory summons, and he stood for a moment inhospitably barring the way to his sanctum. Curtis noticed how wan he looked in the broad daylight, and how attenuated was his ordinarily spare figure; all the buoyancy of life seemed concentrated in his unusually brilliant eyes and the lines about his sensitive mouth, and, withal, a certain new dignity born of intellectual triumph, which caused him to stand forth from out the shadows of his poor surroundings.

The Philosopher felt this as he peered curiously round the bare apartment to which Granby reluctantly admitted him, but his observant glance travelled without delay to the farther end of the room, where stood the Inventor's work-table.

Instinctively both men moved towards it and faced each other, the table between them, still in unbroken silence, for the moment was a crisis not lightly to be passed over. Here, however, the Inventor was a monarch in his own realm, maintaining his supremacy by the power of his gift, while the Philosopher, forgetful of his *rôle*, was pale and agitated, as befitted one athirst with some passionate desire.

"Time presses," he said at length, forcing his voice to calmness. "Is your work completed?"

"Yes."

"Has it been tested?"

"Only upon myself. I have opened the heat-valve

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and found its effect wonderfully exhilarating after extraordinary mental energy."

"Is it thoroughly safe?"

"What do you mean by *safe?*" was Granby's counter-question.

"I wish to know if it will act upon the subject mentally and morally without physical detriment."

"It is hard to tell; the very laws of Nature make these forces dependent on one another to a certain extent. That, I should say, is regulated by the disposition; yours, for instance——"

"Being cold," interposed Curtis.

The Inventor shook his head.

"You are not cold. The phlegm in your nature is only a thick super-stratum. The fire beneath is all the more dangerous because smothered. I know you, Gordon Curtis, better than you know yourself."

"You think so, at all events; but that is not the question. Would a high pressure affect me inconveniently? Do not choose your words, Bronson; regard me impersonally."

"Then, candidly—no; a gentler and more pliable nature would feel more keenly the power of such delicate mechanism."

"That is the kind with which we have to deal. May I examine your instrument?"

There was a marked deference in his tone, though his grey eyes looked black, under the influence, probably, of that smothered fire to which Granby referred.

The Inventor detached an old-fashioned locket from his watch chain, and opening it, exhibited the tiny marvel of his skill coiled up within that limited compass.

"Bronson, you are a genius!" exclaimed the Philosopher, in a burst of admiration. "Come with this triumph of yours to my house and we will test it together."

So they passed out into the dusky streets, where lights were just beginning to twinkle. Curtis led the way and his companion followed unresistingly. They paused before a jeweller's shop.

"Help me to purchase a suitable casket for such a gem as yours," said the Philosopher, and Granby found himself looking over a medley of beautiful ornaments.

A locket of exquisite workmanship was at length selected.

"A present for a lady," explained Curtis, in a meaning tone to Granby as they left the place, and no further word was spoken until they were once more sitting in the shadow of the philosopher's library.

Then Granby broke forth.

"So it is a woman on whom you would practice. I tell you, Curtis, once for all, perfect candour regarding your scheme is what I demand before I subvert my highest endeavour to your pleasure."

"You shall have it," returned the other quietly. "The lady is my daughter. I am fond of her in my way—understand that. She is useful to me as an ornament to my home—as mistress of my household; but she has her mother's nature, weak, impressionable—and she loves. That is not well; both you and I have learned the folly of it. Now, from a metaphysical standpoint, I see but one way out of the evil—the cooling of her too ardent spirit by the use of your instrument, without jeopardising my personal comfort or her happiness."

"Is that all?"

"You shall see for yourself. Come."

He lifted a heavy portière, and led his visitor through an unfrequented passage towards a brilliantly-lighted conservatory, and presently they stood in a fairyland of exotics overlooking the splendid drawing-room, which Granby had seen once before. The Philosopher silently pointed beyond. An instant's glance sufficed. Bronson Granby turned fiercely on his tempter.

"Villain!"—he spoke almost in a whisper, but Curtis looked fearfully round, as if the very flowers heard.

"That man—who is he?"

"It seems that you know."

"Her son. Can you not allow the dead to rest?"

"She lives in him, he must be made to feel the sting that has embittered my life. You suffered, too, can you forget?"

"I loved her," repeated Granby dreamily.

The Philosopher suddenly cast away his restraint. "Look there, Bronson! See her hands in his so trustingly! It maddens me. See him bending towards her! Great Heaven! can you stand idle while he wins his happiness so easily?"

"He is like her—the very look and smile. He has her eyes," said Granby softly.

"Aye! so you can trace the resemblance. Come, Bronson, revive your bitter enmity to me. You would not have *her* son marry *my* daughter. You possess the remedy; use it."

Again Bronson Granby opened his locket. This time he took out the little instrument and looked at it curiously.

"It is through her that you would hurt him—through your undying hatred towards the woman who lies in her grave that you would wreak your vengeance on two innocent beings."

"But you have assured me that my daughter will escape unharmed."

"Only with the best part of her life destroyed, the chill of that wonderful capacity for loving, which is a woman's kingdom."

"But the man, Bronson, and the help you promised. Consider what rests upon this moment, your reputation, honour, fame, wealth, everything that could tempt a man. Do not fling them away for a sentiment."

"And I hold so much in my grasp?" questioned Granby. "Then if what you say be true, what will become of them—of him?"

"Do you imagine that I care? I would indeed be more than human."

"As you are less now. Look well, Gordon Curtis. I hold, as you say, subject to my will, fame, wealth, honour, and a subtle power over two souls, a voice in their destiny, and see, I shatter it all in the hand that created it."

He closed his fingers firmly as he spoke, and before Curtis could interpose by word or sign, the tiny thing lay a shapeless mass in the Inventor's outstretched palm.

For a moment their eyes met in one deep penetrating gaze.

"Let me pass," said the Inventor, coldly, and Curtis shrank back at his command.

Out into the night air, through the lonely streets, went Bronson Granby, never pausing till his garret door was reached. Here his brief strength failed, and all through the watches of the night he sat half-dazed in his chair, his crushed treasure in his hand, his crushed hopes scattered all about him.

Thus the first rays of the wintry morning found him, pale and cold, but smiling as if at some great victory. That "to-morrow" for which he dared not wait had dawned for him in all the glory of eternal radiance.

P. H.

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FOR many hundreds of years the goddess Pele was in the habit of spending a great part of her time among her mortal friends on one or the other of the islands. Sometimes she would be on Oahu at night, and when the inhabitants of Hawaii awoke the next morning, they would find her among them.

In what way she made her rapid transits no one knew. She had been driven from Maui by her own temper, and had made a vow never to stop upon its shores again. Kauai was never a favourable spot with her, so she had only Hawaii and Oahu left on which to disport herself with mortals. The whole under-world was hers, but somehow it did not seem to satisfy her. She would spend a great deal of time with her mortal friends, and but a short time below.

She was particularly fond of the game called papaha, which was simply sliding down hill as children in cold countries do in winter. I said as they do, but it was not actually the same thing, for the Hawaiians had no snow, and used a different sled. The papaha was simply a piece of board, but of some particular kind of wood which is not now to be found. A board was taken, some six feet long and from ten to fourteen inches wide. This was thinned down at the extremities until it was possible to bend it up, something the shape of the modern toboggan. It was rubbed and oiled until it was as smooth as glass.

The person intending to ride upon this board held it upright in his arm beside him until the word was given to start; then he threw himself and his papaha forward, and slid as swiftly as circumstances would permit to the spot decided on as the end of the race.

They used to find a place where the steep hillside was covered with the slippery lava, and then, throwing themselves upon their papahas, they would slide, as rapid as light, from the top of the steep to the shore below. It was esteemed a great feat to be able to slide from the top of Kilauea to the seaside (and so I should think it, for it is some twenty miles), and it was one of Pele's greatest pleasures to join in such a race, and to win it over all her mortal competitors.

On Oahu lived Umikula, the swiftest among men of his island in the papaha races; and he had often beaten the men of Hawaii also, although they had better opportunities for practising the game and making themselves perfect in it, for they had more mountains on which to practice, and longer slides down which to go with the speed of the wind. But even with all these advantages, the men of Hawaii had a struggle to keep in front when Umikula of Oahu came to add another laurel, or rather maile leaf, to the crown of victor which he wore so proudly.

One day he started for Hawaii, accompanied by his beautiful young wife, Lahula, and followed by several canoes, in which were crowded numbers of his young friends of both sexes. In olden days it was not necessary for the Hawaiian to labour for his bread. Kind Mother Nature provided for him a bountiful supply of the taro on shore, and the sea gave of her fish in unstinted measure, so that he was well supplied with poi and fish, the two great articles of food for the Hawaiian even to this day.

Because of this abundance of food ready to his hand, he had many hours to spend in pastime, and often great companies would leave one island, and spend weeks and even months visiting among the others of the group.

It was on such an expedition that Umikula was starting on the pleasant morning mentioned above. He had just finished a new papaha, on which he hoped to

One pleasant morning they landed on Hawaii.

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be able to win any race in which he might enter, and for this reason he was going to Hawaii. His wife and the young men and maidens of his immediate family were as sure of his success as himself, and all were going with him to see him defeat the swift men of Hawaii.

One pleasant morning they landed on Hawaii, near the foot of the slope down which the papaha racers were wont to sweep on their swift sleds. It was some twenty miles from the shore to the top of the mountain. This mountain was Kilauea, in whose crater was the favourite home of the great Pele.

The merry party landed, and after resting and eating of the food which they had brought with them, they started up the mountain. There was a great crowd of young people there already, and soon many more were seen on the road leading from the different villages to the top of the mountain.

On this mountain were two slides where the races took place. The easier was from the top to a place some seven miles lower, and this was where it was supposed the races would be to-day. The other track was from a point some two miles below the end of the first track, and ended at the beach. The ground between the lower end of the upper track, and the upper end of the lower track was rough and broken. No one had ever tried to pass over it on the slender papaha. Rocks and broken lava strewed the ground, leaving hardly a foot to pass through.

All gathered round a great fire.

On reaching the summit, Umikula found that the best men of Hawaii were to be pitted against him; but little he cared for that. He felt confident of victory.

All arrangements were made for the races, which were to begin the next day, and were to continue so long as anyone came forward to challenge the winner. This was fair and satisfactory to all parties, and soon all gathered round a great fire to eat and drink, sing and dance, laugh and talk the hours away till morning should come again.

Morning broke, and the merry crowd hastened to prepare all things for the race, which was to take place immediately after sunrise. The finest of the Hawaiian racers was to try against the visitor.

He came forward, a tall, clean-limbed youth, straight as a dart, with a form like burnished bronze, through which every muscle showed like cord beneath the skin. He had never been pitted against Umikula before, but he was champion of his own island, and felt confident of winning the race. He stood poised on one foot, with his polished sled resting lightly against his side. He looked like a young god, and if he won this race his people would almost worship him as one.

Umikula stood forward, and all eyes were turned upon him, friends with pride, opponents with curiosity. As tall as his opponent, he was slightly heavier. He was older, but only by a few years, and his form did not show the slender suppleness which marked that of Kawili; his face was bright and his smile sweet, but his friends knew what the little furrow between his eyes meant. He saw the strength against which he must strive, and was girding himself for the conflict.

Now the word is given, and as with one motion, both sinewy forms are hurled downward, carrying the slight sled forward for many feet with the impetus of that first thrust. Downward they rushed like lightning, the crowd behind them holding their breath in anxious watching for the end. Down, and still down they rushed, swift as the wind, first one and then the other gaining a slight advantage as they swerved from side to side on the slippery track.

Now the path runs for rods beside the steep mountain side, which towers above them grim and grey in its silent majesty; now they skirt along the edge of a precipice which falls sheer and deadly beside them. One false movement and one of them would be cast from the track to be hurled a thousand feet to the bottom of the cliff, where the women would gather round his mangled body with wails of sorrow, telling of the deeds that he had done while living, and of the death that had so suddenly ended all for him.

But both were skilful, and the dangerous place was left behind. The race is half done now; this rock is the half-way mark, and he who passes it first seems likely to win the race. Both strained every nerve to gain here, but in vain. When they passed by, the youths who had run up to the rock earlier in the morning to see the racers pass could scarcely tell which was ahead, for both were equal in the race. Not an inch divided them. The race was still to be won, and the excitement grew higher and higher as the sentinels signalled to those at the top that there was no distance between the two men.

Half-way from the rock to the end, and still the racers were equal, but now it was evident that Kawili was feeling the strain. He had been used to win before he reached the half-way stone, and now the nervous strain was becoming too much for him. He panted, and the veins on his forehead stood out like ropes, while his eyes were strained and bloodshot. From his lips a slight froth flew, and he began to fall behind. Only a little, but still it was behind. Another effort and he gained the lost ground, but that effort was his last. His head fell lower, his sled slowly turned from the path, and the game was lost. Umikula won it, but by scarcely a sled's length. Kawili had given him the hardest race he had ever had.

The friends of Kawili gathered round him, and he was soon restored to himself. He was a generous foeman, and cherished no revengeful feelings towards the man who defeated him.

This ended the racing for the day. It is too hard work for a man to try more than one race the same day, so it is usual to have the race over early in the morning, before it begins to be very hot, and then all hands rest in the middle of the day.

The next morning Umikula rose, and after his bath in the clear water of a spring, which was fed by an underground stream, he went up to the top of the mountain, to the place where the racers started if they intended racing on the upper track.

A great crowd of people were already assembled there, and to them Umikula proclaimed his victory of the previous day, and challenged any competitor who wished

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to try issues with him, to come forward; if none appeared, he claimed the honour of champion of the islands.

The Hawaiians stood about in silence. They were not too well pleased at the thought that a man from Oahu was able to come and beat them at their own game, and on their own ground. There was no help for it, however, for no one felt like trying to conquer the man who had defeated Kawili.

Umikula was on the point of claiming his title of champion, when suddenly a girl stood among them. From where she came, or how she got to the place where she stood, none could tell. There she was, and she raised her hand for silence, while in a clear voice she called:

"I have heard thy words, O Umikula, and while I wish not to be called champion of Hawaii Nei, still I can defeat thee in a fair race. Give me my choice of papahas, and on the morrow will I show thee how to ride the fleet sled to victory."

As Umikula looked in surprise at her, it suddenly occurred to him that it was Pele. She was disguised, and none else could recognise her, but he knew that no other could speak as she did.

For many days he had not seen her. She had followed him for months, and pressed him to return her love, which she lavished upon him, but in vain. He was but newly wedded to Lahula, the fairest girl on his native Oahu, and he cared nothing for any other; and he knew also how capricious was Pele in her love. She would choose one among the men of his race, and for a time, sometimes long, oftener short, would lavish upon him caresses and gifts, but soon, weary of one lover, she would turn from him and seek another. Well for the discarded one it was if she did not destroy him on parting.

Umikula had been followed by her for months, but at last she seemed tired of beating against the rock of his determination, and had left him in peace. But now she was here again, and no one else seemed to have recognised her. Love may have keen eyes for the loved one, but hate has keener, and will recognise the hated one through a disguise that would mislead even a mother. He knew that Pele must hope that in defeating him she would serve her own purpose, but just what that purpose was he could not imagine.

But he must accept the challenge she made or else allow it to be said that he, the best papaha racer in the kingdom, was afraid to race with a woman. This would be worse than death to his proud spirit, so he quietly accepted the challenge.

Another day of feasting and rejoicing, and then came the morning of the day in which he greatly feared he was to fight against more than mortal power. If he strove against the power of the gods, what chance was there for him to win?

All day he remained apart with Lahula. He at first wished to keep the cause of his trouble from his loving wife, but she won it from him at last. He confessed that he feared that Pele had some secret reason for asking him to make this trial of skill with her, and that he would suffer more than defeat at her hands if he could not find some way in which to bring craft to bear against craft.

When morning came Umikula stood again upon the hilltop, and Pele came forward and stood among the crowd. She asked for silence while the terms of the race were settled upon, and the curious crowd stood waiting for her to speak. Tall and slim as a young tree she stood. Her jetty locks were flung behind her head and reached far below her knees, almost trailing upon the ground. Her dusky cheek was flushed, and her eyes were bright with the thought of the scheme which she was ready to propound.

"Listen, O Hawaiians. I wish to give the terms on which I will race with this man from Oahu. The race shall be either to the end of the upper course, or, if either of us wishes, when that point is reached, it shall continue on to the seaboard. The victor shall be the one who first reaches the end. I, if I win, do not care to be called champion. It would be but a barren honour for me, a woman; but I ask that the winner shall have power over the loser, and may demand what he or she will. The loser is to obey any order given by the winner. Wilt thou grant this, O mighty Umikula, who dost wish to be called champion of all these fair islands? Or does thy heart fail thee? Perhaps thou wouldst rather take thy swift canoe and seek thy home on distant Oahu? If so, go, and no more come here to boast of thy prowess, when I, a woman, can cause thee to draw back in fear of defeat."

"Listen, O Hawaiians."

The taunting words were heard in silence by the assembly. All wondered at the tone of the strange woman. Only Umikula and his friends knew who the speaker was.

They knew that she had taken this taunting tone in order to force Umikula, whom she saw had recognised her, to race with her, and they knew that she had some scheme by which she felt sure of winning the race.

It was soon seen that this scheme must be in making the race from the top of the mountain to the bottom. This would make at least twenty miles, and a part of the distance it was impossible for them to pass on the papaha. This was the way in which Pele evidently hoped to win. She would end the race at the foot of the first track if she was leading at that point; if not, she would insist upon the lower course being added, and hoped that the difficult passage over the two miles between the two courses would so exhaust Umikula that he would be unable to do his best on the lower course.

But this very scheme Lahula had foreseen, and was even now busy providing against it. She had left her husband at the first faint light of dawn, and with her whole crowd of maidens and youths had gone down the mountain side. No one wondered at this, for it was often done. Friends, wishing to see the end of the race, would go below to meet the victor, instead of stopping above to see him start.

Umikula stood in thought a few moments after Pele had ceased speaking; then he stood forth and said:

"I accept thy terms, O goddess, for well I know thee,

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although thy state and pomp are left behind. I will nevertheless race with thee, and the winner shall have leave to lay his commands upon the loser, and shall be obeyed. I call upon all here to bear witness to this, and to the agreement that each shall run the race as seemeth best at the time."

"We bear witness, we bear witness," called the crowd, who stood astonished at the words of Umikula. None had suspected the goddess in the stately maiden who had come among them, but now they saw her, and felt that Umikula was lost.

He alone seemed to see a chance. He stood tall and stately among them, no sign of trouble upon his brow, a smile just parting his lips. He stood looking intently down the mountain side, and, as the last words were spoken, his keen eyes caught sight of a little column of smoke that rose slowly from the thick forest beside the racecourse. This little sign told him that his faithful wife had succeeded in her task, and was now awaiting his coming.

Straightening up his tall form he asked: "Is the great Pele ready for the race?"

It did not suit Pele that he should be so ready to concede her demands. She feared that he might be better prepared for the task than she had believed, and might have some plan by which he hoped to get the best of her in the coming race.

There was no help for it, however; as she had been the one to give the challenge to this special race, she could not ask to have any changes made at this late hour. She must go through with it as best she could.

"I am ready, O Umikula; and I will now tell thee the command that I shall lay upon thee when at the end of the race, if I am held as victor. I command thee to put aside the woman whom thou hast taken as wife, and that thou shalt come with me where I shall bid thee. This is the command that I shall lay upon thee at the end of the race."

"Haste not, great goddess, to claim an unrun race. I may be the victor. If so, what wilt thou have to say as to the charge that I shall lay upon thee?"

"Boast not, Umikula. Never yet has Pele been defeated by mortal. Think not that thou will be able to do the deed none other has been able to do. The game is mine now, as surely as it will be an hour hence. Send then thy fleet-footed brother to tell the brown girl, for whom thou hast spurned me and my love, that she may be far away before I slay her, as I shall if she dare look twice at thee when thou art mine, won by my skill and power in the race!"

Umikula clenched his hands and bit his lip at these words, but he knew that Pele was striving to make him lose courage and strength by taunting him thus, and he would not allow her to see how much her words affected him.

The sun was just rising, and the first beams were shining behind them. In another hour the race would be over, and he would be either free for ever from the power of the angry goddess, or else he would be her helpless slave, and, worse yet, his loved Lahula would be at her mercy. This thought gave him added strength, and he made the last few arrangements and stood ready, waiting for the words of the starter.

Pele also stood waiting, and, as the word was given, both sprang forward as if moved by one spring. Prone upon the slender boards they threw themselves, and the race was begun.

Side by side they flew down the steep mountain. Neither gained an inch for the first half of the distance. When the half-way stone was reached, both boards were still even. To one standing beside the path, it was as if the two forms were upon one papaha. Not a line's breadth to the advantage of either could be discerned.

Still on and on; now they were nearly at the end of the upper course, and still the race was undecided. Now they reached the end, and still it was an even race. Neither showed any sign of stopping. The momentum of the papaha had given them power to run a little way over the rough middle ground, but soon this momentum was gone, and slower and slower the sleds ran. Umikula did not mean to lose any time waiting for the sled to stop, and he sprang up and seized his slender board in his arms and sped forward over the rough lava-strewn ground towards the lower slide.

Pele was a moment behind him, but she was lighter and swifter upon her feet and soon overtook him. Side by side they ran, and each flung the sled to the ground at the lower slidein the same instant.

Now it was life or death, for if Pele won Umikula had determined to end his life rather than to leave his wife to the mercy of the fickle Pele.

Soon overtook him.

Still the race was an even one. Neither had the slightest advantage. The only hope for Umikula was that Lahula had succeeded in her attempt to defeat by guile the one whose power made it impossible to win by other means. A third of the distance was passed, and still the two were moving side by side, with no perceptible difference. But now one or the other must forge ahead. They would soon reach a place where it was impossible for them to pass side by side.

The path divided at an immense rock before them. One side of the rock was a narrow path, which seemed to skirt the edge of the precipice, where a movement to one side would be certain death. This path had been called impassable for the racers. The main path was also too narrow for two sleds to glide along side by side. One of the two must fall behind and follow the other. This main path was much longer than the direct path that passed between the rock and precipice. Could one take this inner path, he would gain many rods, but it was never thought of. No one could hope to pass over its length, for there are sharp turns in its course where the slightest swerve meant certain death upon the rocks, thousands of feet below.

As they reached this point, Pele gathered all her force and swept ahead of Umikula. She shouted with joy as she passed, for seemingly this decided the contest. They had been evenly matched all the way from the top of the mountain, and the one who lost the advantage here seemed to have lost the race.

She flew over the track, but Umikula had no idea of falling behind. He turned into the narrow path behind

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the rock. Death was preferable to defeat at the hands of the ruthless Pele, and this was his only hope. If he could pass safely through this narrow strip, he would gain the lower end of the course some feet before Pele could reach it, and in so reaching it was his only hope.

Each maiden poised upon her head a calabash.

The plan Lahula had resolved upon to aid him required that he pass a given point a little distance ahead of Pele. If he could do this then the race was his.

And he did it. He flew straight as an arrow through the narrow pass and gained the straight course a little ahead of his competitor. Pele had supposed that he was following her hidden by the turns in the path, and was thunderstruck when she saw him dart out of what seemed from her point of view the solid cliff far ahead of her.

The race was nearly ended now, but Pele called to her aid for the first time her supernatural powers, and was gaining upon Umikula.

From the place where the two paths joined, the way was straight to the coast. Half-way from that point was a stretch of ground where it was impossible to turn from the path, as the ground was covered with blocks of lava and by broken rocks for many rods. Beside this place stood Lahula and her companions. There were two lines of them, standing one each side of the path. Each maiden poised upon her head a calabash. The long lines stood motionless as the racers swept down towards them. One more effort, O Umikula, thy faithful wife will aid thee, and the race is thine.

The effort was made. He glided over the path scarcely half-a-dozen lengths before his enemy, but that was distance enough. As he passes he hears the voice of his Lahula: "Courage, courage! The race is thine. I am here and will give it to thee. Pele shall lose the race, and losing it, shall lose all power over thee."

As the words rang out, Lahula raised her hand. As if the motion had given life to the statue-like figures, the two lines on each side bowed forward with raised arms, and each threw from her the contents of the calabash which she had carried upon her head.

They threw the contents upon the track before the swift-coming Pele, and, as she reached the place, her sled ran slower and slower. She strove to drive it forward, but though the track was steep and the rock glassy, she was unable to make any progress. Slower and slower it moved, until at last she stopped, foiled and beaten by a loving woman. The track was covered inches deep for rods in length by sand, which the friends of Umikula, led by his wife, had cast before the goddess to stop her in her career.

She rose from the slim board, and as she rose she saw Umikula spring from his sled at the foot of the hill, and clasp his wife in his arms. But for her the end would have been different. But for her woman's wit, Pele would have conquered, and Umikula would have been a slave.

Pele was defeated. She must bow to the will of a mortal, and, worse yet, must see that mortal stand beside the one whose trick had beaten her, and know that he loved her more even than Pele had hoped to make him love her. Sullenly and slowly she went back up the mountain. At the top she stood aside, waiting for the coming of the victor. Whatever he bade her she must do. And it was her own plan. She herself had made this proposition, and she must abide by it.

Umikula followed her up the mountain, accompanied by her friends, but Lahula would not seek the top. She feared some treachery at the last, and waited below.

When Umikula reached the plain at the top of the mountain, he found the crowd awaiting him. The oldest man of them came forward and greeted him as champion not only of Hawaii, but of all the islands.

Pele stood by with clouded face, waiting to see what task the victor would lay upon her.

"Pele, it was thy own plan that the vanquished should yield obedience to the victor. As thou hast said, so it shall be. I have won the race from thee, and thou must do whatever I bid thee. Is not this the agreement?"

"It is. I will obey, but beware of my vengeance! I am defeated, but not by thee. I should have won the race had not thy wife tricked me."

"And was not it a trick for thee to strive with thy power against one with only mortal strength? Was the race fair when thou hast all thy power as goddess to bring against me, a mere mortal? But enough of this. I have won the race, and thou art to obey whatever I command. Is it not so?"

"Speak, and I will obey as I agreed."

"Then, Pele, I bid thee to seek thine own home below the fire depths, and command thee never again to seek this upper world. For countless years thou hast made the lives of men in these islands a misery hard to be borne, but now I command thee to seek thy own kind, and to keep thyself to thy kind. Never more mayest thou come among us to make trouble for our wives and to take the love of men for a pastime and then cast the broken lives aside when tired of them. Never more shalt thou darken the day by thy presence. I bid thee go and never return. The under-world is thine. Do as thou wilt with it, but seek no more this fair upper world. This is the command which I lay upon thee, and thou must, by thy own agreement, obey it."

She stood as she spoke upon the edge of the crater.

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Pele stood silent. She was caught in her own trap. She herself had said that the vanquished should obey the victor, and she must obey the command that Umikula had given her.

For the last time she looked abroad over the fair islands, which she had loved well. For the last time she stood fair and tall in the light of the sun. Never more could she join in the games and sports of the Hawaiian race. She had loved them much, even while she had been a tyrant over them. But now it was over. She must seek the dark depths of her mountain, and must live in its dismal caverns. No more sunlight, no more happy days in the summer air.

But, though conquered, she was still a goddess, and she would yield as a goddess should. She stood for the last time in the light of the fair day. She looked for the last time, and then raising her head haughtily, she spoke:

"I am conquered and must yield, O Umikula, but beware of the vengeance which I may yet take upon thee and thy crafty wife. I go to return no more. But if I return not, I may send thee a message that will crush thy proud spirit and bow thy haughty head in the dust. Thou hast used thy power relentlessly, but beware of my vengeance."

She stood as she spoke upon the edge of the crater, and as she ended she turned for one farewell look at the sweet world, then plunged into the depths of fire that raged far below.

As she vanished from sight the ground beneath their feet shook with an earthquake shock, and the smoke and steam that rose from the crater almost smothered them.

"Fly, fly, for Pele has called her fiery brothers to avenge her, and we shall be destroyed." This was the cry that rose from the thousand throats, and with one accord the throng fled from the mountain top, seeking safety in the valleys below.

Umikula sprang upon his papaha and flew down the mountain side towards the distant coast, where his wife and many of his friends awaited him. As he fled he looked back at the top of the mountain and was stricken with awe at the sight of the fire and smoke that arose from its depths. Pele was indeed avenging herself, and it seemed as if all on the mountain would be destroyed.

Pele had indeed tried to pour vengeance out upon her conqueror, but she again failed, because the love of Lahula had been working to save Umikula. Lahula had feared that in some way Pele would destroy Umikula when she found he had her in his power, and this was the reason she had declined going to the top of the mountain after the race. She had, instead, gone to the beach and had busied herself in getting all things ready to leave Hawaii at a moment's notice.

When all was ready she rested, and, sitting on the edge of the canoe, looked up towards the mountain top to see if there was any sign of her lord's coming. To her horror, she beheld, instead of the peaceful scene of the morning, one of dread and horror. From the top of the mountain, fire and lava were streaming high into the air. Smoke and steam had almost hidden the face of the earth. A stream of fire was swiftly flowing down the track over which the fateful race had taken place.

But where was Umikula? At the thought of the peril to which he must be exposed, Lahula felt her heart fail her, and she sank almost senseless to the ground. Her companions filled the air with their wails and cries of grief. But suddenly one of them changed from cries of sorrow to shouts of joy. Far up the side of the hill a form appeared swiftly gliding towards them. It was Umikula. He had kept ahead of the fiery torrent, and was still safe.

But would he escape? Would he be able to reach the shore before he was overtaken by the stream of liquid fire? And if he did, would he then be safe? Could they get away from the shore before they were destroyed by the avenging flood? Was it possible?

Had Umikula been alone; had he been left to his own resources, he would have been lost; but he had a faithful wife, who was even then working for his salvation. Down the side of the mountain he flew, with the hot breath of the lava surrounding him; but he was not overtaken. He reached the shore just before the first wave of the glowing lava caught his feet. His wife had been ready for hours, and as she saw that his safety depended upon her, she ordered her companions into the canoes, and when Umikula reached the shore all but one of the canoes were out of the reach of the flood of fire.

Sent the canoe flying out to sea.

In that Lahula awaited him, and as he sprang into the frail craft she dipped her paddles deep into the water, and sent the canoe flying out to sea, far beyond the reach of the stream of lava.

Again had Umikula defeated Pele, and again the defeat was by his wife's love and forethought.

Pele destroyed the villages and buried the valleys under streams of fire and lava that she hurled upon the island in her wrath. Many of the natives who had witnessed her defeat looked their last upon the world on that summer day. She covered the track upon which she had been defeated deep under a stream of ashes and lava, but she did not succeed in destroying the man who had roused her wrath. He escaped in safety, and his children and grandchildren often told the tale I have told you, of Pele's last day in the upper world, and of the love and faithfulness of a woman who had been the cause of her defeat.

I have told you the story as it was told to me under the soft light of the Southern Cross. If you do not believe it, you can see the track down which the racers flew on that sunny morning many, many years ago.

J. P. L.

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An Episode of the Strike.

THE soft glow of a tall lamp, crowned with a fearful and wonderful shade of red silk, rested caressingly on the pondering face of Miriam Walcott. She was remarkably pretty at any time, and with the shadows of Colonel Walcott's library as a background, and Jack Pennington as a critic, she was simply faultless.

Jack had been very seriously in love with her as long as he could remember, which must have been fifteen years at least, judging from the fact that when she first dawned upon his boyish horizon she was arrayed in a pink sunbonnet, and had the remains of a dozen mudpies impartially distributed over her face and hands.

Those fifteen years, while serving principally to intensify Jack's adoration, had also brought about an appreciable change in his relations to its object. The faithful swain was now living in a little heaven on earth, miraculously created by a tearful "yes," lately wooed from the girl before him. The chief features of this celestial existence were long *tête-à-têtes*, like the one at present in progress—*tête-à-têtes* in which the most trifling topics became possessed of enormous importance, and almost every occurrence of the day was reviewed in circumstantial detail.

"Bill Flanagan came to see me to-day," remarked Jack, with his elbows on his knees, and his fingers linked under his chin. "He's out of work again, and as blue as possible in consequence. He's the son of our cook, you know."

"I *don't* know," answered his *fiancée* reprovingly, "because I never heard you mention his name before. Why should he come here and bother you about work?"

"Simply because when he first came up to the north of England with two shillings, a lame ankle, and a face as blue as you make them, I took an interest in him, and got him a job in the town; later I found him a place in a neighbouring coal mine. But he's a genius at ill luck. He had scarcely learned his work when the whole crowd were ordered out on strike; and now behold my *protégé* drawing the imposing sum of five shillings a week from a labour union, and boiling with indignation against my old friend, the master of the mine."

"I think strikes are the most absurd, ungrateful things imaginable," observed Miriam, with a frown.

"Not always," answered Jack, giving the fire an encouraging poke, which sent a sharp burst of little sparks up the chimney. "Sometimes the men are in the right, and I believe they are in this case; but perhaps their methods are wrong."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the approaching sound of a firm footfall, and the next moment the tall form of Colonel Walcott filled the doorway.

The colonel was a big, hearty, good-natured old soldier, fond of his pipe and his magazines, and with a decided leaning towards good wine, clever books, and his pretty daughter.

As he entered, Pennington rose slowly, and put out one trim, white hand in greeting.

"Good evening, colonel," he said. "I trust you will excuse the informality of my dropping in to dinner?"

For a moment the colonel made no reply. He simply straightened himself a little, and compressed his lips. Then he said seriously:

"Mr. Pennington, I have something for you to do."

"Certainly, sir, anything in my power," answered the other, surveying his face curiously.

"I may say," continued the older man, "that I am addressing you as your superior officer, not merely as your friend."

With a dim premonition of what was coming, Pennington raised his hand in salute.

"You will report at once at your barracks. All leave of absence has been cancelled. Use your best endeavours to aid in the immediate summoning of your company."

Six hours produced a wonderful change in the ——th. Here and there men were busily rolling blankets, filling haversacks, or carrying boxes of cartridges towards the drill hall.

Five o'clock brought another change. The companies were forming in the open courtyard of the barracks, and in accordance with the order, "Thirty rounds of ball cartridge," on every side men were bending over cases of ammunition, and busy hands were slipping the smooth polished cylinders into place in the leather cartridge boxes. Then followed the flash of swords, sharp words of command, and the ringing of steel-shod rifle butts as the ranks came to "order arms."

Pennington, standing straight as a ramrod, felt his heart swell under his trim uniform. It was a strange situation. Less than twelve hours before he had been sitting in a quiet library, with a fire crackling before him, the little brass tea-kettle singing merrily, and the girl he loved more than all the world at his side.

Complacent and contented in his luxurious surroundings, the rioters, and the possibility of active service for his regiment, had seemed as distant and indefinite as a mirage. Now, shoulder to shoulder with a thousand men, his haversack and canteen at his side, his blanket strapped across his shoulder, and his cartridge-box, heavy with the possibility of a score of deaths, at his belt, the mirage had become a reality, and the man who had learned to believe his hours made for love was facing a duty sterner than any he had ever known.

Meanwhile, the rioters had succeeded in inspiring a very wholesome fear in the minds of their avowed enemies, the companies' officials, the police, and the non-union workmen. Violence hung like a cloud about the pit-mouth, and anxious faces watched from places of security for the attack that was momentarily expected.

Towards the close of the day Jack Pennington found himself, with his own and two other companies of the ——th, guarding one of the miners' tool-sheds. As night fell, and he took his post for sentry duty, the picture was really suggestive of actual war. A light mist crept in from the sea, and shrouded the shabby neighbourhood with a soft white veil, through which the form of the next sentry loomed dimly, and the bivouac fire showed strangely bright with its surrounding group of half illuminated figures.

Pennington, at first alert for approaching footsteps

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soon found his thoughts drifting back to Colonel Walcott's library. He could feel Miriam's arms around his neck, and hear herwhispered "Good-bye, dear; God bless you." Then with a guilty start he remembered his duty. At the same moment he saw a man standing a few paces away. Before he could challenge there came a great crash, the earth reeled madly upwards, and dimly conscious that several of his comrades were running towards him, Pennington pitched heavily sideways, and fell full length upon the ground, his rifle clattering noisily among the stones.

It was a great opportunity for the reporters, and they fell upon it greedily. So it was that the newspapers announced to the startled town that Jack Pennington had been struck with a heavy stone, that his forehead had been torn open, and that he was lying at the point of death, at the very moment when the young gentleman in question, with a strip of court-plaster round the bridge of his nose, was protesting to the sergeant his ability to do sentry duty again. Like most men, the sergeant was easily persuaded when his own inclination seconded his judgment, and less than twenty-four hours after the casualty Jack found himself once more detailed on the first relief of the guard, and stationed at his former post in front of the tool-shed.

"You heard the orders? You will know how to treat anyone disregarding your challenge?" said the officer of the guard; and Jack's expression was not particularly benign as he replied: "I think so—yes."

The hours passed slowly, and Jack was patrolling his post for the third time, when he saw some one approaching him. His sharp "Halt!" brought the man to a temporary standstill, but almost immediately he advanced again. Then came the click of Pennington's rifle as he slipped a cartridge into the chamber. "Halt!" he called again, peremptorily.

For an instant the man stopped. Jack saw him raise his hand and step swiftly forward with an indistinct mutter. Like a flash the sentry's rifle snapped to his shoulder, and then officers were running quickly to the spot, for the first shot had been fired, and a man was lying face downward on the pavement.

"I obeyed orders," said Pennington nervously, as the tall figure of the captain came forward.

"I know you did, sir," was the reply. "You were perfectly right."

"Still living," said a sergeant, stooping over the wounded man. "Here, lend a hand, some of you fellows, and we'll let the surgeon have a look at him."

To Jack left alone, the minutes seemed hours. It is not a pleasant sensation at any time to know that one has the blood of a fellow creature on one's hands. Finally, he was approached by the corporal of the guard, bringing a private from the second relief to take his place, with the message that the wounded man had recovered consciousness, and that he was wanted at once in the hospital.

Mentally marvelling at the summons, Jack went directly to the hospital, and stopped a moment at the door to view the scene within. The man lay on a seat, his shirt torn open, and a surgeon carefully examining a wound in his side. The electric light intensified the pallor of the sufferer's face.

As Jack entered, he raised his head slightly, with a murmured "Misther Pennin'ton."

At the sound of his name the young man stepped quickly into the room.

"Bill Flanagan!" he cried. "Can it be you? Oh, I am so sorry!"

"Don't grieve, surr," answered Bill faintly. "It was me orn fault, shure it was. I read in the paper that ye was dyin', and I kem to giv' meself up. Misther Pennin'ton, surr, it's a lot ye've done for me, and it's a lot I'm afther owin' ye. I'm going fast, but I want yer forgiveness 'fore I'm gone. I t'rew that stone, surr, not knowin' 'twas yerself I hit. 'Twas the papers gev' me to know I'd kilt ye intoirely. I meant no harm to-noight, as thrue as I'm here; but when I heard yer voice I t'ought it was afther bein' a wraith I saw, and I lost me head. Can ye forgive me, surr?"

Jack's voice had a suspicious break in it as he bent over the dying man.

"Bill, my poor fellow," he cried. "God help me, I've killed you!"

The electric lamps dimmed for a moment and then went out. The strikers had cut the wires, and with the failing of the lights Bill Flanagan's soul passed to its eternal rest.

RICHARD SIBERT.

A CHILD OF THE MADONNA.

MRS. ONOFRIO stopped stirring the broth, placed the pan in which it simmered on the hob, and hurried into the next room. Remigio had sent up a piping note which, like a good Calabrian mother, Signora Onofrio at once translated as meaning that the young gentleman wanted the *zizze*. Remigio was just forty days old, but it was not this Lenten term that made him wail for milk. It was simply that he was hungry, and his jaws were not equipped for solids.

It may have been a pathetic picture, after a fashion, that of Mrs. Onofrio suckling her tiny son, but it was more comical than beautiful. Remigio had a look of condensed age about him, as if he had been blown in by the centuries. Nobody in the wide, wide world but his mother could have gone so far wrong as to think his plastic face anything but a pain to look upon.

He was swathed like an Indian mummy, or an Indian papoose. White clothes and towels were wrapped closely round his small anatomy and were tightly tied. Only his large downy head and his crimson arms were free. Otherwise Remigio was a rigid system. His small nose was flat against his face, his round eyes looked like glass marbles stuck in a piece of dough, and his mouth was so unnecessarily large that it really seemed clever of the little chap not to let anything escape from it at meal times.

When one looked at Mrs. Onofrio it was evident that Remigio had every right to be a homely baby. Her coarse, black hair was brushed straight back, and made her face, with the high cheek bones and sallow skin, look more pinched and hard. There was a gaunt aspect to her eyes. Her lips, too, were thin and colourless.

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Yet when Mrs. Onofrio smiled there was something as sweet and poetic in it as a bluebird in flight. After all the soul is the best beautifier. Perhaps the loss of her first child may have had to do with the good woman's expression. He, too, had been Remigio, and when his mother called her second son by the same name, as if he were an *encore* of his too fleeting predecessor, she may possibly have felt that she was giving the new baby two Saint Remigios to look after him, and that one of them was his little, unknown brother.

But the lot of the Onofrios after they were transplanted to London was not a painful one. In fact, they had what must be considered a prosperous career for inhabitants of the Italian quarter. They lived on the top floor of a house in a street off Hatton Garden. It was owned by a syndicate of Hebrews. Callers on the Onofrios had to toil up six flights of grimy stone steps, each flight with as many joints in it as a yard rule. The staircase was narrow and dirty and dark. On each landing sticky children swarmed like flies round the bunghole of a barrel of treacle. Opposite Mrs. Onofrio lived a tawny-headed Jewish lady, whose personal contribution to the world's population was eight small Israelites. It made Mrs. Onofrio feel very insignificant with her one atomic, beswaddled Remigio.

After one had forged upward through the several strata of tenement house life, advent into the Onofrios' *apartimento* was rather cheering by contrast. For it had a homely, neat, cosy air. There were three rooms. The door from the passage opened at once into the eighteen by twelve kitchen. In the middle of the opposite wall stood the fireplace. At the right of the door the whole space was taken up by a sink, with a permanent washtub, and a wooden table, at which Mrs. Onofrio kneaded the dough for her bread.

At the right, through the door, was visible the bedroom of Signor Onofrio and the good lady, his wife. It was a cheerful, airy room, with a large iron bedstead, painted white. The patchwork quilt was in those gay colours which Italy loves, but fails to use quite as temperately as Nature, and the pillows were large and square, or rather pillow, for there was only one—excellent comment on the conjugal sympathy in which husband and wife dwelt.

On the other side of the kitchen was a much smaller, much darker room. It had hardly anything in it but a bed. A few simple dresses hung upon the wall, and a very modest trunk stood on the floor. Even on a sunny day the light strained into this room but meagrely. Yet here was where Rosella slept, and Rosella was a flower, the sweetest, purest, dearest Italian girl in London. She was Mrs. Onofrio's sister; but Rosella—ah! she was a pretty girl. Large, limpid, innocent eyes with long lashes to them, and her eyebrows set high and delicate in their lines, while her complexion was a clear, warm olive. She was seventeen, and used to sing in the little Italian church. Her voice was not very cultivated, but it was full of Nature's sympathetic fulness. When she arched her eyebrows pathetically, as she sung the *Et Incarnatus est* or the *O Salutaris Hostia* there was a thrill in her tones that made the people in the church pray better.

Something must be said about Signor Onofrio. He had come to England a year before his wife, and at the end of that time had saved enough money to bring her over. He was a good little chap. In fact, the quartette in that little nest at the top of the tenement house were so good as to be almost uninteresting. In the ratio of virtue, Signor and Signora Onofrio were the mean between Remigio, who was only negatively good, of course, considering his forty days, and Rosella, who was good to the verge of sanctity.

Everybody regarded her as almost a little saint, and the family felt that she drew down a blessing on them. There wasn't a stiletto amongst them. The nearest approach to it was a pair of shears. For Guiseppe, who was called "Jo" in the shop, was a cutter. He got ten shillings a day, but it was a good long day. His "boss" was a Hebrew gentleman. Although these wages were far superior to anything Guiseppe could command in Italy, and especially in cold, bleak Calabria, yet living expenses were more, too. But they were a thrifty pair, and the dream of the Onofrios' was to save up enough money to go back to Italy one day, and buy a place of their own. Yes! they hoped some time to have their own vine and fig tree, and die in Italian sunshine.

This is really a great deal about an Italian journeyman cutter, and his homely wife, and his wizened scrap of a baby. But they had the same kind of souls as the millionaires, and though they did not live as far in the city, they were closer neighbours to God than many of these rich people, and were quite as happy.

As the Signora sat in the warmth of the fire, under one of Guiseppe's shirts that waved gently like a flag of truce, patiently letting Remigio get a "good square meal," she heard a light hasty footfall on the stone passage, then the door opened quickly and Rosella came in.

Mrs. Onofrio was almost appalled at seeing that her sister's face was tear-stained. It was such an unusual spectacle—Rosella who always smiled, albeit at times a little sadly. And a pretty face is never improved by tears. Rosella's wasn't. Her slender, well modelled nose was red, and her eyelids swollen by the teardrops that welled over and splashed upon her cheeks. Mrs. Onofrio felt the spectacle as quickly and as keenly as if she had been a man, though, of course, being a woman, it was not so irritating to her.

"What is the matter, *Rosella mia?* What are you crying about?"

Rosella sank into the nearest seat at hand, which chanced to be a camp-stool, and tried to stay her tears. But they oozed forth anew as she said in a choking voice:

"Mrs. Goodridge has discharged me."

"Eh? Didn't you do your work all right?" Mrs. Onofrio adjusted Remigio's stiff little frame as she sat up very straight to attend to this calamity.

"For—for stealing!" sobbed Rosella. The word seemed to stick in her throat, and she ejaculated it quiveringly.

"Stealing!" exclaimed her sister, taking a fierce grasp of Remigio that nearly dislodged him from his supper. What an honest indignation came into her gaunt eyes. She clutched the baby as a thundering Jove might grasp a bolt. "Oh, Rosella! *You* steal! Doesn't she know better than that? Oh, the wicked woman! Bosh!" How finely fierce the frail, thin creature grew at the thought.

"Oh, no, no!" sobbed Rosella quickly, as if averting a malediction. "She can't help it. There was something stolen from the house last Tuesday when I was there all alone," she went on controlling her grief a little, now that the worst had been told. "She had gone out and had let Mary and the cook both have an afternoon off, thinking I could look after the house. She left her purse in the room on the top floor, and when she came back, after I left, she found that it was gone. And she didn't go out until the others had left the house. And the

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front and back doors were both locked and so were the windows. I was the only one there. How can she help thinking I took it? Oh, Tessa!" cried the poor girl, as it came upon her anew. "Who has done this to ruin me?"

Mrs. Onofrio checked her and exclaimed warmly: "She must have made a mistake about the purse."

"Oh, no, she didn't," and Rosella shook her head sadly. "She remembers too well just what she did. She took it out and laid it on the table in the studio, the top room where she paints, before she changed her gown to go out. She meant to get it after she was dressed, but she never remembered it again until she went into a shop and bought something. And I was alone in the house all the time. And so she thinks I took it. She didn't want to believe it. She told me that she and Mr. Goodridge had almost determined to say nothing about it, thinking I might have taken it under some pressing need. And she only asked me to confess it and promise I would not do so again, and she would still keep me. But, of course, I couldn't confess it, and I couldn't stay with her——"

"*Santa Maria!*" cried Mrs. Onofrio. "Stay with anyone who could think you could steal!"

The good woman felt as if Rosella had discharged an unworthy mistress, which was a dignified way of looking at the thing. "Somebody must have got in," she persisted.

"No," said Rosella sadly. "No one could have got upstairs without my seeing or hearing them, because I sat where I could see the staircase, with the idea of watching the house. I am going up to the church to ask Our Lady to help me," she said, rising and putting her handkerchief, which was now a little ball of moisture, into her pocket. "Oh, it is so cruel!"

A crowd of Italian children, boys and girls, hung round the church door, like honey bees over a patch of clover. There was always this band of small Confessors of the Faith at the portal. The little old-fashioned girls, with longer-skirted and higher-waisted gowns than English children wear, had handkerchiefs of green, or red, or brown, bright with gaudy flowers, over their shoulders. They looked like pigmy matrons. The young urchins wore strange garments and cropped hair, their eyes shining more brightly from the fact that their round faces were a trifle opaque through lack of water. Rosella passed through them rapidly, answering their chirps of greeting with a sad smile, and hastening to the altar of the Madonna, sank upon her knees.

"O, Blessed Mother!" she prayed brokenly, her lustrous eyes upturned to the calm sweetness of the Munich image of the Virgin, "you know what I am suffering, and you can and you will help me!"

And Rosella took her beads from her pocket and began to say the Five Sorrowful Mysteries, that the Mother of God would care for her own. No one could have seen the poor girl as she prayed there in the deserted church, underscoring her prayers with her tears, and have doubted her innocence.

But no one of the earth saw her save the small Paolo Gianelli, who had tip-toed up the aisle, and now stood at her side. The dark humid eyes of Rosella, raised to the face of the Virgin, became conscious of this human presence. Without interrupting her *Aves*, she turned her gaze upon the urchin. She recognised at once the best scholar in her catechism class. Paolo also played the trombone in the boys' band, though where he harboured the wind to do it was a mystery.

"Do yer know where Fath'r Bruno is?" he asked, in a husky whisper. He was a robust Catholic, and good Catholics speak slowly before the Presence on the altar.

"No," said Rosella softly. "Is anybody ill?"

"Fath'r's broke his leg," replied Paolo. "'Nd she wants to see Father Bruno, and find out where they oughter take'm."

"We'll find the Brother and ask him where the Father is, Paolo," said Rosella, rising from her knees. An appeal to her charity was like the touch of a spur to a high-strung horse. Her own affliction made her more than ever responsive to human suffering, though a broken limb did not seem so great an evil to Rosella as being branded a thief. One can go as fast towards Heaven on one leg as two.

Inquiry showed that Father Bruno was out, and that none of the priests that served *Madonna di Loreto* were in.

"I'll go home with you and see your mother, Paolo. Perhaps I can be of some help."

So the young girl walked rapidly with the boy along the dingy streets. He led her to a squalid row of brick houses. Then he shot into a passage between them, so narrow that a man with arms akimbo would brush the walls with his elbows, and emerged into a space which, for want of other name, must be styled a court. Several houses of forlorn aspect ran here parallel with the outside row.

Paolo skipped up the rotten wooden steps of the house directly facing the opening of the passage, and pushed open the door at the right just inside. Rosella followed. Compared to this interior, one of the lowest, cheapest lairs of the poor Italians, the Onofrios seemed to have a grand and luxurious lodging. It was a room not more than twelve by ten. The walls and ceilings were covered with whitewash, save where it had flaked off. Poor and scant as was the furnishing, it crowded the small room. A stove in front of a black mantelpiece glowed a dull red in one spot, and a tin with some cheap broth was bubbling in it. A rude cradle with two barrel hoops across the top stood between the grimy windows. Three or four wooden shelves nailed against the wall made a dresser.

Through an opening at the left was seen a bed which stood nearly four feet from the floor. Another bed, much smaller, was at its feet, but this did not obtrude upon the view. This was the sleeping quarters of the Gianellis, where the father, mother, and five children bestowed themselves at night in a way that would have given points to a sardine-packer.

The baby girl, who was the proud possessor of the cradle, cuddled against her thinly-clad mother as Rosella entered. She had thin curls of a reddish, golden shade. The woman looked distressed. Rosella seated herself unasked, and soon drew forth the simple tale of woe. The woman's husband was a day labourer, and he had fallen and broken his leg, and they had taken him away. She did not know where, and this was worrying the poor creature.

"Why don't you send Paolo up to the place where he worked and let him find out?" said Rosella. She could gauge the income of the family pretty well by the look of the place and the children. Her quick eye had remarked on the round, wooden table, a large circular loaf of bread with a hole in the centre, which had evidently been brought recently from the bakery. That meant nourishment, anyhow, for a day or two. It is not as indestructible a solid as it looked.

Mrs. Gianelli acted on the suggestion. With querulous impatience she told Paolo to go to the place where his

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father worked and get the desired information, and return as quickly as possible. Rosella remained until the lad returned, cheering up the mother and talking to the children.

Paolo was longer than they expected. He came in at last, and told where they had taken his father. Then he said with some pride: "He must 'a been shoved, if he fell. 'Taint hard to walk round on a roof. I see a woman walking from one house to 'nother."

So it was perfectly natural that Mrs. Gianelli should say, crossly: "What did you stop to look at things for when I told you to hurry back?"

"'Cause I got her caught," replied Paolo, with some importance. "She was a thief."

One of his hearers listened attentively now. The sound of the word "thief" was a scaring one to poor Rosella. She was regarded as one, and her reputation was gone unless Our Lady of Loreto saved her. And then a thought flashed into her mind like an inspiration. Had the good Madonna helped her already?

"Where was she walking?" she exclaimed, her quick Italian emotionality thoroughly aroused.

"On de houses 'n —— Place. I see her from the street; 'nd she slipped down trou' de skylight; 'nd I tole de bobby; 'nd he went to de house 'nd grabbed her."

What an angel Paolo suddenly seemed in Rosella's eyes! Mrs. Goodridge lived in —— Place. Verily, he brought good news. And she reflected quickly that he had come to her even while she was praying to Our Lady of Loreto to clear her fair name.

"Which side of the street were the houses on?" she asked eagerly.

"On de top side," replied the boy. He was feeling the dignity or having discovered a thief, and the glory of setting that instrument of justice, a policeman, into movement against the culprit.

"I must go," cried Rosella, rising impetuously. "I can't stay any longer now," she explained to Mrs. Gianelli. "I've got to do something. But I will come and see you to-morrow. *Addio.*"

She caressed the baby, and stooping, kissed Paolo, somewhat to that young man's surprise. Then she fluttered out. She felt as light as air! She flew along, almost running in her haste to get to Mrs. Goodridge's. But she did not go so rapidly that she had not time for an unuttered thanksgiving to the Mother of God. Why had she not thought of the roof?

She darted up the steep steps of the Goodridge's, out of breath, but with colour in her cheeks, and a clear brightness in her beautiful eyes. There was a vivacity of innocence in her expression that was eloquent. When the woman opened the door Rosella exclaimed, with a pitiful eagerness as she saw her take on the air of virtue confronted with vice: "Won't you ask Mrs. Goodridge if I can see her at once? Oh, *do* hurry, Lizzie."

"Well, you wait there," replied the servant coolly, but with a mean significance, as she closed the door in the girl's face. Rosella did not mind that much. It was the waiting that chafed her.

When she was admitted by the surly maid to Mrs. Goodridge's presence she broke forth: "Oh, Mrs. Goodridge! They caught a woman this afternoon walking on the roof of these houses and slipping into the skylights. She is the one that——"

And then she stopped suddenly. A thought had come into her mind, a most characteristic one. *She* had been accused of being a thief because circumstances were so strongly against her! And she had been so deeply pained that they could not dream she was guilty. Was she not doing that very thing with this woman? Delicate charity is almost absurd in devising excuses for seeming guilt. Perhaps this feminine pedestrian of the tiles was only the New Woman in a novel, eccentric emancipation! A venturesome creature who strolled on the housetops because she was brave and unconventional and loved the purer upper air. Or, perchance, some dauntless maid who took this short route to pay a visit to a neighbouring maid!

Rosella did not quite think these very thoughts, but she did check herself on the brink of passing judgment, and said instead: "Don't you think, dear Mrs. Goodridge, that she may have taken your purse?"

Mrs. Goodridge having heard the story, and not being an idiot, did think so must assuredly.

"I will get Mr. Goodridge to go up to the police-station and find out all he can, Rosella. And you wait here until he comes back," she said, with decision.

Mr. Goodridge did go, and came back with the news that the roof-walker had been searched, and several silver-backed toilet articles, a small watch, and a lace scarf were discovered on her person. None of these harmonised with her garb or appearance. Furthermore, Mr. Goodridge had called on the people who lived in the house on whose top the lady had walked, and they found that just those articles were missing. It was a clear case. The woman had not walked on the roof for mere exercise. The most ardent charity had to admit that.

"There is no doubt that she took the purse, Rosella," said Mrs. Goodridge, "and it will come out when she is brought up for trial. And we both beg your pardon for not believing in you in the face of any suspicious circumstances. In fact, I think we did, although now is a little late to say it. But I want you to come back at once, and we will never doubt you again, my good girl."

Rosella had not felt happier in her life than when she went home in hot haste. But she was not so hurried that she did not slip in at *Madonna di Loreto*, and pour forth a fervent prayer of gratitude to our Lady. And when Mrs. Onofrio heard the news, she was so carried away, that she stood Remigio in the corner, like an umbrella, and wept on her sister's neck. And Remigio, who may have felt the indignity to himself, joined in the weeping, shutting his eyes very tight, and opening his mouth very wide, so that when he recovered his normal appearance, he almost seemed beautiful by contrast. Things are so relative in this world.

Although that was not one of the two nights in the week when they had spaghetti, Mrs Onofrio prepared a huge dish of it with tomatoes, and Parmesan cheese grated over it, and bought a pint bottle of Chianti. When Guiseppe came in at nine to this succulent and extravagant feast and heard the reason thereof, he acquiesced like a trump in the whole thing, and forbore to reflect that it might mean a day longer in returning to Italy. The one regret was that Remigio could only share indirectly in this feast of thanksgiving to *Madonna di Loreto.*

J. J. à B.

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SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men, set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years' imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter. Weldon is inveigled to a lonely bridge near Cornwall, and disappears. Squirrek pays a fruitless visit to the spot. Squirrek arouses the citizens of Cornwall, who make their way to the outlaws' hiding-place. One outlaw is found and killed, and the cabin is set fire to. Squirrek discovers a piece of paper with the following cryptogram: "1——0——1. Cfujk't Bsdfj 50zct Mpqug Vmeds sid Xgjsf Nbg." He afterwards falls in with the two remaining outlaws, and has them arrested. They are lynched by a furious mob. Both Florence Woodland and her father have dreams of Señor Almanaz in connection with Fred Weldon's disappearance. The Señor leaves Somerville professedly for Cuba. He writes from Chicago to Miss Woodland, asking for a solution to the cryptogram. This is sent, but is intercepted by Squirrek, who has been tracking the Señor, and who at last discovers Fred Weldon, more dead than alive. A description of what happened at Devil's Creek is found in his journal. He is secretly removed to No. 19, Blankton Street, but is again tracked by Squirrek.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Caught!

After a careful diagonis of the case, Doctor Butler pronounced Fred Weldon hovering between life and death, where it needed but a breath of wind to sweep him one way or the other. In answer to my inquiry regarding poisoning, he replied:

"It looks very much that way, but I would not say positively that he has been tampered with. Toxicology is a science itself, and the most skilful practitioner would not pronounce judgment in such a case without more data than are before me. Let me examine his medicine."

Strict search failed to discover anything more than a single bottle of what was labelled "Liniment." Doctor Butler smelt and tasted of this for a few moments and then set it down again.

"That's all right; no poison there."

"What is it?"

"Simply a harmless wash for the wound upon his forehead, which is certainly improving very fast."

"I consider that circumstance suspicious in itself," said I. "This Doctor Ruthven certainly uses medicine, and if it were innocuous, and would bear examination, he would not be afraid to leave it here."

"But you saw several bottles at the other place."

"Very true; but that was before he had been alarmed by my visit. He had not then begun to cover up his tracks."

The physician smiled very significantly, but made no reply. He was a man naturally reticent, and whatever thoughts he had, he preferred to keep them to himself.

Having left what medicine was needed, and given his instructions to the nurse, he departed, and I followed shortly after, without having exchanged a word with the patient.

As the life of Fred Weldon was still in danger, I concluded to send nothing more to his friends until there was a change one way or the other. I had some thought of telegraphing to his mother to come, but Doctor Butler advised against it, and his advice was followed.

At the police headquarters I encountered Runkle, who was impatiently awaiting me.

"This Spaniard has scented danger, and is seeking to get out of the city. I want you to go with me to the terminus to watch for him; I have given half-a-dozen men a description of him, and they are on the look-out."

Glad enough was I to assist in the apprehension of this heartless wretch, who had plunged so many hearts into the lowest depths of woe, and who deserved the severest penalty that it was possible to inflict.

I was well satisfied that if Almanaz knew of the sharp search being made for him he had a good chance of eluding us after all. As every one knows, there are so many avenues of ingress and egress in Chicago, not to mention the numerous haunts of desperate characters, that a fugitive from justice is almost as safe in this great city of the west as if he were in London or New York.

But it was not likely that he had any suspicion of the measures we had instituted, and consequently would not take any extraordinary precautions. It was not at all improbable that at that very moment he was at his hotel packing up ready for flight, but our force was too small to weaken it by sending to see.

Runkle informed me, as we walked along, that Doctor Ruthven had been locked up for the night, but that he would no doubt be liberated on bail in the morning. Nothing as yet had been discovered of any more of the confederates of the Cuban, Almanaz.

We walked rapidly towards the station, like men conscious of the value of time. We were talking together in low tones, when I suddenly placed my hand upon Runkle's arm and checked him.

"What is it?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yonder is our man!"

There was no mistaking the identity of the tall figure with bag in hand crossing the street. He took the same direction that we were following when he reached the pavement—evidence that we were none too soon in seeking him at the station.

He was about twenty yards distant, and going at a rate that required our utmost efforts to surpass. We came up, one on either side, and both placed a hand upon his shoulder at the same moment.

"*Señor Almanaz, you are our prisoner!*"

He started as if shot, and stared first at me and then at the other, and was absolutely speechless. Locking arms within his, we wheeled about and started for headquarters.

Still he failed to utter a word until we had nearly reached our destination, when he bristled up and demanded what

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it all meant. I could see from the glances he cast at me that he suspected my identity, and no doubt understood

"Señor Almanaz, you are our prisoner!"

what our proceedings meant without any enlightenment from us.

We did not reply to his questions, nor take any notice of his threats, but kept him securely between us until he was safe within the walls of the prison. Then we separated, and, as the hour was late, I went to the nearest hotel, where I am sitting writing up my journal before retiring to rest

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CHAPTER XXXII.

The End of Almanaz.

Tuesday, November .—Thank a good Providence! Fred Weldon has come up out of the dark valley into which I believed, last evening, he had gone too far to retreat.

The kind old soul, Doctor Butler, tells me that the crisis came about midnight, when he had returned to watch for it. Under beneficent heaven, with the aid of a powerful constitution, which had never been impaired by dissipation, he began to rally, and has continued steadily to improve ever since.

This morning he is still so weak that I concluded not to intrude upon him, but to wait until towards evening.

The doctor says he is flighty, and at times completely astray with his faculties, but his mental equilibrium will be recovered simultaneously with his intellectual, and, unless some unforeseen accident occurs, there is nothing to be feared in his condition.

After my call upon Doctor Butler I dropped in upon Runkle, who met me with rather startling intelligence.

"Upon going to the cell of your Cuban acquaintance I found him dead and cold."

"Suicide?"

"Yes, with the dagger. The fellow was more frightened than he need be, for it isn't likely he would have been hanged."

"The disgrace of the exposure and punishment, which could not fail to follow his arrest, were a thousand times worse than death itself to his proud spirit."

"I suppose so; but it always seems to me that the most foolish thing a man can do is to make away with himself. However, he is gone."

There was no attempt to hunt up the confederates of Alvarid Almanaz, excepting Doctor Ruthven, who easily produced bail, and was allowed to go free. As it would be impossible to prove anything criminal against this man, although it is morally certain that he is one of the most guilty and dangerous men in the community, his connection with our affairs, I suppose, terminates with his walking out of the gaol.

The reports from Doctor Butler continue encouraging, and this evening Fred Weldon and I met on a level for the first time in several weeks. The poor fellow reached out his hand as I took my seat by his bedside.

"Squirrek, you are a good friend of mine," he said, in a feeble voice, while the tears welled up and filled his eyes.

"No better than you are to me."

"Tell me how mother is."

"Perfectly well, by the last accounts. I telegraphed to-day that you were rapidly recovering, and might be expected home in the course of a few days."

"I cannot express to you how much I thank you."

"Then don't try to do so."

"Tell me all about it."

Tell him I did, from beginning to end. It took a long time, and during the recital it would be hard to say which showed the greatest interest—the nurse, the doctor, or Fred Weldon himself. He drew a long sigh of relief when I had finished.

"What an experience has come to me from my getting mixed up in this Mulligan business! But how long before I can go back to Somerville with you?"

"Doctor Butler is the gentleman to answer that question," I laughed, looking towards the physician.

"I see no reason why he should not be able to return the day after to-morrow; but you must not allow yourself to become too much excited, for the reaction cannot fail to set you back again."

"I will endeavour to be careful."

Suddenly the door was pushed hurriedly open; the form of a woman swept by us towards the bed.

"Oh, my son! my son!"

And, with her arms thrown round the neck of her boy, Mrs. Weldon sobbed as if her heart were bursting, while Fred cast his weak arms round her, and their tears mingled.

"I found him dead and cold."

For a few moments we were silent, and I am not ashamed to say that my own vision became misty, while Doctor Butler blew his nose again and again, cleared his throat, and fidgeted as though he did not know what to do with himself.

"I am—am—really afraid this is too much for our patient," he said, walking aimlessly about the room.

"It looks as if it were too much for us," I replied, making a poor effort to be cheery.

The old doctor, however, was fidgety and uneasy, but he saw it was useless to interfere. Such a course might produce more injury than good.

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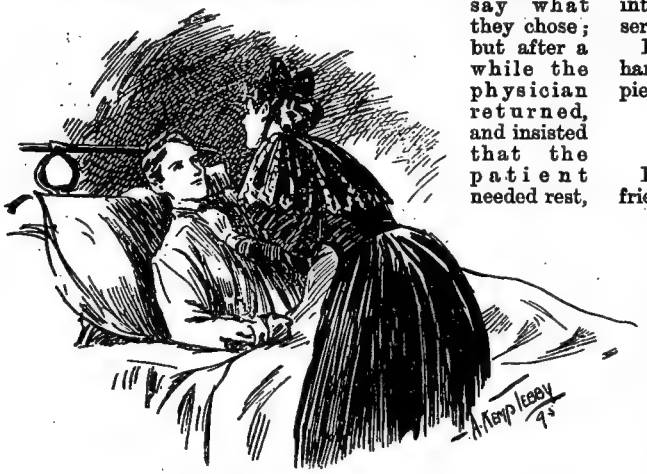
When the tempest of joy had subsided the calm came, and Mrs. Weldon raised her head and looked fondly in the face of her son.

Then the doctor and myself wandered out of the room for a few minutes, until they had been given an opportunity to say what they chose; but after a while the physician returned, and insisted that the patient needed rest,



"Oh! my son! my son!"

and should not be disturbed any more, at least for a time.

"To tell the truth," said he, with a serious face, "I am afraid that he has already been put back several days."

But no one else feared any such thing. The radiant countenance of the young man himself proved that it was the best tonic that could have been given him.

As might be expected, Mrs. Weldon would not listen to any arrangement that shut her out from her son.

"By him I shall stay until he is ready to move," she said in her quiet but emphatic manner, "and, then he shall rest his head on my shoulder until he lies in his own bed at Somerville."

"Them's my sentiments," said Fred, who was beginning to feel light-hearted, and was disposed to be facetious. "How are all the folks at home, mother?"

"Especially at Judge Woodland's," I put in; "that's the point he is aiming at."

Mrs. Weldon started, and put her hand in the pocket of her dress.

"Dear me! If I didn't nearly forget it."

"Forgot what?" asked Fred, a flush of interest overspreading his face.

"There! I do believe I have lost it," she added, without heeding his question, and fumbling anxiously in her dress.

"Lost what, mother?"

"Never mind; I don't suppose it is of much importance."

"If you will only tell us what it is, mother, it will be some relief."

"Oh, Fred! did you speak to me? Why Florence gave me a letter for you, and I do believe I have lost it. I don't suppose there was much in it, and if there was, she can tell you when you get back to Somerville. You don't care, my son, do you?"

"Oh, no," was the response.

But I saw plainly enough his keen disappointment, although he did his utmost to conceal it.

"Let me see," said his mother, as if striving to brush up her memory; "where did I put that letter?"

She sat in thought for a few moments, and then drew out of her bosom.

"How came I to forget it? Here it is."

Fred Weldon's hand trembled violently as he opened the letter, despite his determined efforts to appear cool and self-possessed.

I narrowly watched his countenance as he read the few lines within. First there was the intense straining look of interest; then the flash of a new happiness, followed by the serene radiance of young love.

He read it over several times, and then folded and handed it back to his mother, as though it were a business piece of paper in which he had no material concern.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Detective Finishes his Diary.

In the evening I dropped in and looked upon my young friend. His mother had gone out to procure some delicacy for him, and the nurse was dozing in another chair.

He evidently believed himself alone, and did not notice my knock nor my entrance. As I looked in I saw he was reading the note of Florence Woodland.

He started guiltily when he became aware of my presence, and hurriedly put the missive away. I had enough good taste not to notice his embarrassment.

"I never saw a man improve so fast," I remarked cheerfully. "Are you able to walk?"

"I will soon show you."

With which he rose, and passed round the room several times, with something like his natural, elastic step.

"I should say you will be able to go home to-morrow."

"We have made our arrangements for leaving by the noon train," he replied.

"Has Doctor Butler given his consent?"

"Yes; rather reluctantly, I confess, but the whole thing is settled. You accompany us?"

"Yes; my business is not quite finished. There is one little matter that must be attended to."

He looked inquiringly at me, but I did not deem it best to explain at that time.

"By the way, there is a little thing that I ought to mention to you, as I think it will perhaps please you."

"Let me hear it."

"When it became known that you had left our neigh-

It seemed as if the whole town was at the station.

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bourhood—and a great many thought you would never return—there was a manifestation of interest and friendship in your welfare so general in its character that you would scarcely believe it."

"Ah!"

"Yes; among all those outside your own family, I do not believe there was a person who suffered more keenly than Florence Woodland."

The arrow struck, and he started and flushed as if detected in a crime.

"I am an older man than you, Fred, and can look at matters more coolly. I took occasion to sound this young lady, and my impression—to make it short—is, that she thinks so much of you, that it only needs a little attention on your part to cause her to think all the world of you."

He stammered out some pointless reply, and then to relieve him, I changed the conversation.

* * * * *

Somerville, October —.—Fred Weldon is in his own room again, so strong and well that he refuses to be put to bed.

It seemed as if the whole town was at the station, and when the young man appeared, the excitement was indescribable. It reminded me of the war times, when some popular general started on his travels.

Such shouting, such hurrahing, such shaking of the hands, such a rush and crush of the swarming multitude, was absolutely fearful.

I feared for the consequences of this upon Weldon, but he stood it well.

I found a sort of mushroom popularity attached to myself also. Judge Woodland, usually so discreet, had taken the pains to elaborate, at an alarming rate, upon the virtues of his friend Mr. Smith, and I did more smiling and handshaking than I had ever done.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Solving the Cypher.

Adolph Squirrek, the detective, took the earliest opportunity to call upon Miss Florence Woodland, to make sure of the translation which had so sorely puzzled him.

The officer was received with the greatest cordiality by both father and daughter, who fully appreciated the service

The detective took it out of his pocket-book.

he had rendered the community, he being the main instrument of rooting out the pestilential Mulligan gang.

All saw, too, that he had been the means of saving the life of Fred Weldon, who was given up as dead long ago, and who certainly would have perished had he remained in the hands of Doctor Ruthven and Señor Almanaz for a few days longer.

The unmasking of this villain was a theme for remark for a long time in Somerville. More than one young lady had looked askance but longingly upon the handsome and accomplished Cuban, although there were none who would now admit that they had ever felt anything but contempt for the frivolous fop.

It was evening when the detective entered the parlour of Judge Woodland. The latter was so delighted to meet him that the visitor could scarcely find time to speak with his daughter; but finally he stated his errand.

"Your translation, Miss Woodland, undoubtedly is the correct one," said he, "and yet with it before my eyes, and with the fact that you give the same number of letters that there are figures staring me in the face, I cannot gain any clue to the riddle. Before making use of the information you have given, I have called to ask you to explain it to me."

"Have you the writing with you?" she asked, with a laugh.

The detective took it out of his pocket-book and handed it to her with the question:

"Did I ever tell you where I obtained that?"

"I do not remember that you did."

"It was found on the island, in the cabin that we visited and burned. The minute I placed my eyes upon it I suspected its character; but that did me no good."

"You remember that I sent the reply to Señor Almanaz, and I suppose he has availed himself of it long ago."

"No; I do not think he has."

"Why not?"

"I don't think your letter was received by him."

The detective said nothing more, and the significant tone in which he made the remark rendered it unnecessary.

Miss Woodland carefully examined the cypher for a few moments, and then came and stood beneath the chandelier, Squirrek on one side, and her father and his spectacles on the other, both peering over her shoulders.

"In the first place," said Squirrek, "what is the meaning of those figures at the top?

"1—0—1

"Cfujk't Bsdfj 50zct Mpqug Vmeds sid Xgjsf Nbg."

"That," she replied, in her smiling way, "means that the cypher in the centre stands for a letter, but that in reading the lines below, you are first to take the preceding letter, as it comes in the alphabet, and then the second. Do you understand?" she asked, turning her fair face around so as to confront the bearded and grizzled countenance of the detective.

"Not a word," he laughed.

"I will make it plainer. You see at a glance that, as the letters are written on this slip of paper, they make no sense at all. This proves that they were not intended to do so, but that each letter represents another letter than itself."

"I got that far without help, but no further, and never could if I laboured twenty years."

"Because you didn't go at it the right way."

"Pray tell us *your* plan," said Judge Woodland, who was not the least interested of the party.

"In all such cyphers that I have examined there is always a clue to be found more easily than people think. You can never get it by starting at the beginning, but you must glance at the cypher as a *whole*, and notice its peculiarities."

"And that reminds me," said Judge Woodland, turning towards the detective, "of an exploit of my daughter's in that line which I have never mentioned to you."

"I shall be glad to hear it."

"Have you ever read Edgar A. Poe's story called the 'Gold Bug'?"

"I remember it distinctly."

"You will, then, recall the jumble of figures that are there presented as being found upon a piece of parchment, and as containing some important secret. You will, perhaps, recall also that the story—which, like all of Poe's works, I consider a masterpiece of art—was published in

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two numbers of a Philadelphia newspaper. The first number contained the cypher, and the second the solution. This was over twenty years ago, before Florence was born; but several years since my housekeeper borrowed the papers containing the 'Gold Bug.' I offered my child the first number, with the promise of a handsome prize if she could make any sense of the figures. I no more dreamed of her doing it than I did of her going to the moon; and yet *she did.*"

"That was a feat of which anyone might feel proud."

"And this is the way I did it," said Florence. "I held up the paper and looked at the cypher as I would have examined a small piece of statuary. Anyone could have understood that the figures represented letters. One figure occurring oftener than the others very naturally stood for the letter '*e*,' which is most used in the English language, and so on. You remember the process by which Poe built up his sentences. My solution was not as perfect as his, as, after I made out some of it, I guessed at the rest. There are two points in it which are vulnerable. The figures at the top are of no assistance whatever, and I cannot understand why they were put there, except to remind the writer of the method, if he should ever forget it.

"You notice the '*50zct*' and the '*sid*'; these are the two combinations which I worked upon, asking myself what letters or words they most likely represented. There were two words that almost instantly suggested themselves. The '*sid*' must stand either for '*the*' or '*and.*' I first tried '*and,*' but, comparing the two, found it was impossible to deduce any law or rule for them. I next took '*the,*' and made this discovery:

"The letter '*s*' is the one which immediately precedes '*t*' in the alphabet, '*i*' immediately follows it, and '*d*' again is the next one preceding.

"Here is seen at once a certain method; these three letters, like the first three terms in an arithmetical or geometrical progression, announce the law which governs the others.

"But we will attempt to pierce the mystery at another point, taking the '*50zct*' which I mentioned. This struck me as a measurement of something; the three letters represent inches, feet, yards, rods, or miles. The words '*yards*' and '*rods*' are the only ones which are abbreviated to three letters, as *yds* and *rds*. Trying the last, nothing can be made of it, and we will take up the other, '*yds.*' The letter '*z*' follows '*y*,' '*c*' precedes '*d*,' and '*t*' follows '*s*.'

Here the same thing is discovered, and we see the meaning of the figures, which instruct you to take, instead of the letter you see, the one immediately following it in the alphabet, and then the one preceding it, alternating in this manner all the way through the cypher.

"We will now go back to the beginning, and test the rule. Instead of taking the letter *c* with which it opens, I tried the letter *b*, but saw, after going through the word, that I had begun wrong, so I tried *d*, and in a few seconds had worked out the dreadful word *Devils*; the next proved to be *Creek*, and, following it up, the whole thing read:

"'Devil's Creek, 50 yards north, under the white oak.'"

CHAPTER XXXV.

An Eavesdropper.

"There it all is," added Miss Woodland, handing the paper back to the detective, while all three took their seats, the latter gentleman complimenting the skill of the young lady, and the father looking rather proud of her.

"There is one thing still which I do not understand," said Squirrek. "You translate the figures literally, why is that?"

"I judge that is likely to be correct, as the regular alternation of the letters is continued without any regard to that. If there were a break here, I would have made the same change with them."

"That point is immaterial," replied Squirrek.

"That is the legacy which the Mulligans left you," laughed the judge.

"I really hope that it may be the key to your fortune, for you surely have earned it."

"I shall not fret myself if this amount to nothing."

"How do you account for such a sentence having been put in cypher?" inquired the judge.

"I presume all of these men knew of its existence, but that it was written by one of the Mulligans, the others

He manœuvred somewhat to get a private word with Florence.

understanding that it was the lock to their hidden wealth, and that if anything occurred by which they were sentenced to suffer the penalty of their crimes, they would give the key to their men, so that they might divide the booty among themselves."

"Why has it not been divided, then?"

"You will recollect that the Mulligans were the last who fell into the hands of the committee, so that the necessity did not exist, except, perhaps, in the case of the Cuban."

"Perhaps he has availed himself of the discovery."

"No; he used every entreaty possible to get the secret out of them when they were in gaol, but they resolutely refused to give it to him, and he was led to apply to your daughter."

"What reason or pretext had they for keeping it from him?"

"I don't think he was ever popular with the gang, on account of the peculiar position he occupied, which gave him such an advantage over them; and although fully as wicked as they, yet his tastes were somewhat different, and kept him in a manner apart."

"How was it that they refused to expose him?"

"I wondered that they did not do so, but I suppose it was another version of 'honour among thieves.'"

"I cannot say, Mr. Squirrek, that I understand what this Cuban's real position was," remarked Judge Woodland, inquiringly.

"It was *sui generis*. Furnished with an abundance of funds, and highly accomplished, he moved in the very best society, and was thus given opportunities for making discoveries which proved exceedingly remunerative."

"Ah! I understand."

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"At the same time he was enabled to spy out any serious danger which menaced the men."

"When did you first suspect his character?"

"The evening that I met him for the first time, in this room. I began watching him from the first, and soon learnt what *rôle* he was playing."

"Do you think he had any suspicion of your identity all this time?"

"Yes; for some cause or other he was suspicious of me when I made my appearance in ministerial costume, but I threw him off his guard, and obtruded myself under his very nose, without his dreaming who I was."

"You must have been thoroughly disguised."

"So I was. You remember, judge, that when 'poor Tom Borie,' as he was called, was on trial, the presiding judge, the jury, and witnesses each received a warning letter?"

"Distinctly, and I got one myself, although I never mentioned it before."

"They were all written by one person, and he was Señor Alvarido Almanaz."

"Is it possible? I never suspected it."

"Yes; and your daughter will now understand my reason for calling here one day and looking so attentively through her album."

"I remember you showed a special concern about a piece written by that individual."

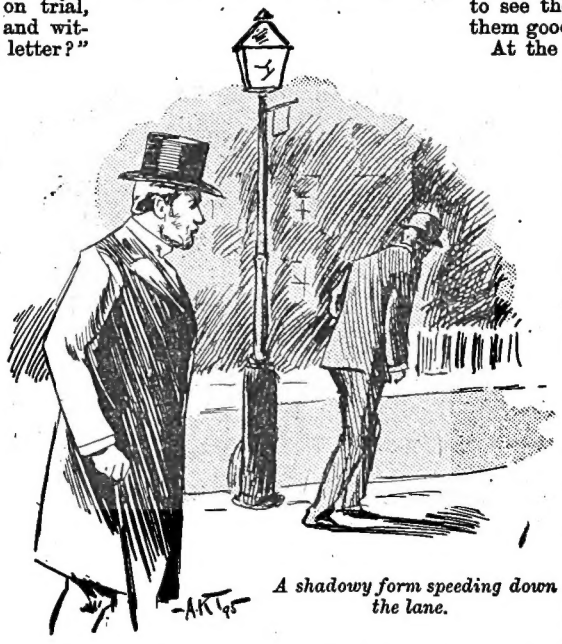
"Yes; I was examining the penmanship. Wherever he put his autograph, or made a single letter with his pen, he attempted to disguise his hand, for he was well aware that there was great necessity for his doing so."

"You had no doubt about that?"

"None at all; there were certain ear-marks, as we call them, in all. He was the same person, too, who sent the letter to Fred Weldon, and then betrayed him."

"You amaze me! He richly deserved the fate the rest of the gang received."

"There can be no question about that. Coming frequently in contact with both him and young Weldon, I could not fail to notice the contrast between them."



A shadowy form speeding down the lane.

"I always admired the young man," remarked the judge, in reply to the observation of the detective.

The daughter was silent, looked down, and said nothing.

"He is one of those few young men who improve on acquaintance. He has had two great objects in life, for which he has struggled nobly—one a praiseworthy ambition to make himself an honourable name in his profession; the other, to place his mother beyond the reach of want."

"Fortunately the last incentive exists no longer."

The detective paid no heed to this direct reference to his own generosity, but continued:

"I shall always feel an interest in him, and predict for him, should his life be spared, a brilliant future."

Squirrek did not tarry long at the judge's, but promising to see them as often as he could, bade them good evening.

At the door he manœuvred somewhat to get a private word with Florence, but he found it could not be done without attracting the notice of the old gentleman, and he scorned to appear as though he were taking advantage of such a friend.

"I don't know as they need any help from me," he soliloquised as he walked homewards; "they say that if a couple are intended for each other they will find it out some way or other—sh!"

The detective had forgotten his usual caution in musing upon love affairs, and was reminded of his remissness by the sight of a shadowy form speeding down the lane in front of him.

He was never more startled in his life, because he was taken completely off his guard.

The fugitive was too far ahead of him, and going too fast for him to think of pursuing him, so he paused and gazed after him until he speedily vanished in the darkness.

Then, as the detective resumed his journey towards the town, he muttered to himself:

"I do believe that fellow has followed me to Judge Woodland's, and heard every word of our conversation. If so, it looks as if there were going to be trouble."

(*To be concluded.*)

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IMPORTANT NOTICE.—Messrs. GRAHAM & CO. intend to present their Customers with a Monster Parcel as a means of advertising their celebrated

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For the small sum of **6s. 6d.** we will send as follows:—

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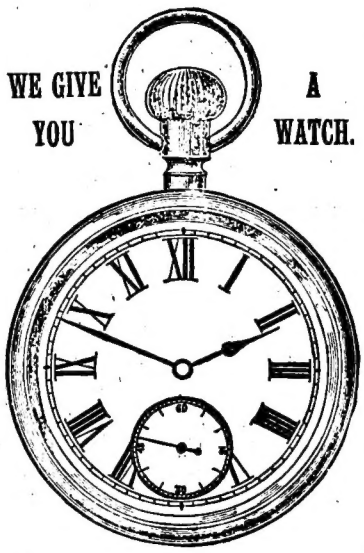

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GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a Correct Timekeeper. Call and see them.

We do this to save the enormous cost of advertising, preferring to give our customers the benefit. As we lose money on each parcel we cannot supply more than two parcels to one person. If you cannot call get a P.O. at once, and send for this wonderful parcel. Orders will be executed in Rotation. **MONEY RETURNED IF NOT AS REPRESENTED.**

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